IMPROV AT ODDS
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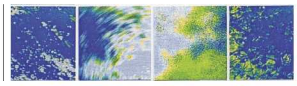

DIAGNOSING DIZZINESS
A TYPE OF MIGRAINE WITH VERTIGO BUT NO HEADACHE
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The New York Times

INTERNATIONAL EDITION | FRIDAY, AUGUST 21, 2026

How Brazil is charting its own path

Andre Pagliarini

OPINION

"Trump 2.0 is being much better than Trump 1.0, right? Well, Bolsonaro 2.0 will also be much better."

So declared Flávio Bolsonaro this year. Mr. Bolsonaro, the son of the disgraced former president Jair Bolsonaro and a leading contender in Brazil's October presidential election, has been trying to draw together both countries in a shared political project. President Trump has been only too happy to oblige. Since his return to office, Mr. Trump has taken an active interest in Brazilian politics. In June, he shared an article on Truth Social describing the country's coming presidential race as the "next major test" in the Trumpian project of "making the Americas great again."

The country's coming election will not be decided by the American president.

Yet the election will be decided by a very Brazilian question: Who speaks for the nation? Both sides in the race are competing furiously to answer it. Mr. Bolsonaro insists that the administration of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, a progressive elder statesman, has capitulated to organized crime and a corrupt international left; Mr. Lula, for his part, brands the Bolsonaro camp as servile suck-ups to Washington, willing to concede everything for Mr. Trump's support. The charge on both sides is that the other is surrendering the nation to foreign interests and that it alone can be trusted.

This distinctly Brazilian tussle has defined the country's public life for more than a century. Rather than rewriting the terms of Brazilian politics, Mr. Trump has simply given both the left and the right new ammunition for a long-running ideological dispute. The president may claim to be molding Latin America in his image. But in Brazil, he's behind the curve.

Brazil has long been haunted by the gap between its potential and its ability to deliver. It possesses the sixth-largest territory on earth, vast natural resources and a population of over 200 million. For most of the 20th century, its economy grew faster than virtually any other country's. And yet Latin America's largest nation never quite became what its boosters always insisted it would: a global power of shared prosperity. That maddening, persistent distance between promise and reality is what has made nationalism the master language of Brazilian politics. Whoever could answer the

PAGLIARINI, PAGE 10

The New York Times publishes opinion from a wide range of perspectives in hopes of promoting constructive debate about consequential questions.

FINBARR O'REILLY FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

At the heart of the Ebola outbreak

Family members, gravediggers and medical staff with the coffin of a man who died the day before at a cemetery in Rwampara, the Democratic Republic of Congo. *PAGE 3*

Fading hope in a far-off prison

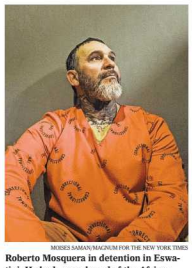
FROM THE MAGAZINE

Roberto Mosquera, born in Cuba, is held in Africa after U.S. deportation

BY NICHOLAS CASEY

As he stepped out of the American military cargo plane, Roberto Mosquera still couldn't tell where he was or why he had been taken there. When federal immigration agents forced him onto a secret flight 30 hours earlier, it was a hot July afternoon in Texas. Now, after traveling thousands of miles, he felt a cold winter's morning in the air.

He was in the kingdom of Eswatini, a tiny, landlocked country in southern Africa that until recently was called Swaziland. Mosquera had never heard of it. He hadn't set foot outside the United States since he was 12, when he arrived on a fishing boat as part of the 1980 Mariel boatlift from Cuba with his mother, a sister and her infant daughter. As a teenager, he joined a Miami gang, and in his 20s, he took a plea deal after being charged with attempted murder for shooting a rival gangster in the leg. That would have been grounds to deport him, had he been from almost any other country. But Cuba wasn't cooperating with the United States on deportations, so Mosquera was allowed to stay, provided he checked in with the authorities each year. He built a new life for himself, becoming a specialty plumber and a born-again Christian; he married and had four daughters.



MOISES SAMAN/MAGNUM FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Roberto Mosquera in detention in Eswatini. He had never heard of the African country before he was sent there.

Then in June of last year, Mosquera, who is 59, went to renew his work permit at an immigration office. An immigration official told him that his time in America was up. With President Trump now back in office, Mosquera knew these were not empty words. But if the United States couldn't send him to Cuba, where would he go?

He was taken to the Krome Detention Center, a notorious holding facility for deportees in Miami, then to another in El Paso, where he was confined without being able to contact lawyers for nearly two weeks. Soon agents told him to get ready to move again. Mosquera was surprised when he was loaded onto a small luxury jet — it seemed to him more like something the singer Marc Anthony would rent, he told me. Along with him were four other detainees, from, as he would later learn, Jamaica, Laos, Yemen and Vietnam. They were transferred to a military cargo plane at a U.S. air base in the East African nation Djibouti, and more than a day later, the five men landed in Eswatini.

Before they could make sense of the situation, they were forced inside a metal cage that was fitted onto a transport truck and driven to the Matsapha Correctional Complex, Eswatini's maximum-security prison.

That was more than a year ago. Mosquera still sits in that same maximum-security prison with nowhere to go. No charges against him. No way to appeal his predicament. No sign that he will ever be freed. Cuba has not signaled any willingness to take him, and Mosquera says he has no desire to go there. Eswatini will not release him from prison, even though he committed no crime in Africa.

I first heard about his case through Alma David, an immigration lawyer at Novo Legal Group in the United States, who represents him. When I reached Mosquera on a WhatsApp video call in early June, he had already spent 11 months behind bars. The Eswatini government refused to let me visit him or any of the others detained with him, so WhatsApp video calls were our main means of communication.

"Can I ask you a question?" Mosquera asked me. "Do you think I'll ever get out of here?"

Mosquera is one of a growing number of people whom the Trump administration has put into a global administrative limbo. For more than a year, it has been

DEPORTATION, PAGE 5

To gain tactical edge, terrorists prompt A.I.

WASHINGTON

Chatbots increasingly serve as tools for attack planning, despite models' guardrails

BY DUSTIN VOLZ AND ERIC SCHMITT

When a gang of motorcycle-riding members of Boko Haram attacked a military base in eastern Nigeria a couple of years ago, they were stymied by a defensive trench surrounding the complex.

The extremists regrouped. Before launching another assault, they asked A.I. for help.

"We saw in a movie how motorcycles can jump over bridges," a former Boko Haram commander told Antonia Juelich, a terrorism and technology researcher at Cambridge University in England. "We used A.I. to learn how to do this. We gave it information, like what motorcycles we use and the distance we need to jump and so on, and it gave us steps on what we have to do."

Using tips from chatbots, mechanics modified the motorcycles to allow for faster acceleration and top speed. The riders dug their own holes, filled them with broken glass and fire and practiced jumps — sometimes with fatal outcomes — until they achieved enough aerial liftoff to mount a successful attack, defectors said.

The episode, recounted in a research paper by Dr. Juelich shared with The New York Times ahead of its publication last month, highlights how generative artificial intelligence tools are increasingly aiding terrorist groups directly on the battlefield, experts say, despite efforts by their makers to safeguard them from misuse.

Until recently, the Islamic State, Al Qaeda and other extremists primarily used A.I. in the information-operations realm — propaganda production, translation, recruitment and security tradecraft. But that has evolved as jihadists have turned to A.I. for tactical on-the-ground advantages, according to current and former U.S. military and counterterrorism officials and independent researchers.

The evolution highlights a broader challenge for the A.I. industry. Chatbots have built-in limitations intended to prevent users from soliciting information that could cause harm to others or themselves. But researchers have repeatedly found that people can circumvent safety protocols, often by slowly but persistently coaxing models into divulging information they are trained to restrict.

Dr. Juelich conducted nearly 60 interviews with 27 former members of Boko Haram in Nigeria over the past year. Her field research found that terrorists were using chatbots to design explosives, fix or upgrade other weapons and brainstorm ideas on how to attack their enemies.

A.I., PAGE 8

A nuclear turning point comes to the screen

Film revisits tense summit on arms control between Gorbachev and Reagan

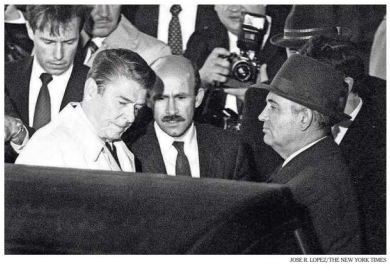
BY PETER BAKER

It was, as one person in the room described it, something of an Agatha Christie thriller, if Agatha Christie had written about superpower summits.

There were the leaders of the two nuclear giants huddled in a supposedly haunted house built on top of lava along a windswept coast, with rain lashing the windows and the fate of the world at stake.

The arms control meeting in Reykjavik, Iceland, between Ronald Reagan and Mikhail S. Gorbachev in 1986 has slipped into the fog of history. But the tense, unscripted encounter that was deemed a failure at the time arguably proved to be the beginning of the end of the Cold War.

Now 40 years later, Hollywood has embarked on a mission to rescue Reykjavik from obscurity with a star-studded movie, "The Brink of War," featuring Jeff Daniels as Mr. Reagan, Jared Harris as Mr. Gorbachev and J.K. Simmons as Secretary of State George P. Shultz.



JOSE R. LOPEZ/THE NEW YORK TIMES

President Ronald Reagan, at left, and Mikhail S. Gorbachev, the Soviet leader, at the end of their two-day meeting in Reykjavik, Iceland, in October 1986.

The film, which came out last weekend, serves as a kind of bookend to the 2023 hit movie "Oppenheimer," taking the nuclear arms race born in the remote desert of Los Alamos to its crescendo in the Arctic frontier of Iceland.

"Like any great story, there was a lot at stake," Mr. Daniels said in a joint interview with Mr. Harris last week. "It was life or death. There were 70,000 nuclear weapons pointed at each other, and nothing to stop them, and that whole mutual assured destruction was not even a deterrent. It was the end of the world."

Mr. Harris, a British actor, recalled that it felt even more real at the time growing up in Europe. "We were aware that we were on a knife's edge," he said. "We were on the front doorstep of any nuclear exchange."

This is not just history, in the eyes of the filmmakers, but a parable for the current day as well. As wars rage and the world's superpowers appear headed once again for an arms race, the film is a

NUCLEAR, PAGE 2

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PAGE TWO

Chinese comic crosses an ever-tightening line

Guo Degang under fire after inserting humorous ad libs into patriotic song

BY YAN ZHUANG

SHIHO FUKADA FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

NG HAN GUAN/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Guo Degang, left, performing in Beijing in 2011. The song on which he riffed in Wuhan, "Playing My Beloved Pipa," was used by the Communist Party in a celebration, above, in 2019 for the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China.

Ad-libbing during a routine is standard for many comedians. But in China, it can land performers in hot water. That was the case for one of the country's most famous comics, Guo Degang, who is under official investigation for riffing on the lyrics of a famous patriotic song during a show.

Mr. Guo has drawn comparisons to the likes of Ricky Gervais, and has starred in movies and hosted TV shows in China. After a show in Wuhan in July, he was reported to city's culture and tourism bureau for singing a modified version of the song, which hails the bravery of Chinese soldiers during a historic battle against Japan.

His case highlights the delicate line comedians must tread in a heavily censored creative landscape. The comedy scene provides a rare venue for indirect criticisms about contemporary life in China; but the space for self-expression is becoming increasingly narrow as China's top leader, Xi Jinping, has made arts and culture a focus for ideological crackdowns.

The bureau launched an investigation into Mr. Guo last week after receiving a complaint, according to The Paper, a popular Shanghai-based state-backed newspaper. The bureau said it was looking into whether he had violated a regulation under which performers must have their sets vetted by officials in advance, the outlet reported.

An official who answered the phone at the Hubei Culture and Tourism Bureau, in the province encompassing Wuhan, confirmed the investigation against Mr. Guo on Tuesday. He described the matter as sensitive, but did not provide more details. A show Mr. Guo was scheduled to perform in the city of Xi'an was postponed, according to a social media post by the theater that was going to host it. Organizers have not announced if it will be rescheduled.

Mr. Guo did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Mr. Guo, 53, is credited with reviving cross talk, or xiangsheng, a comedy genre that mixes scripted and improvised sketches that originated in the Qing dynasty. In the 2010s, Chinese media lauded him for attracting younger audiences to a genre with an aging fan base.

But improvisation can be at odds with official policy, which requires comics to submit scripts and set lists of their performances for official approval in advance. In recent years, Mr. Xi has stepped up controls on speech that challenges the Communist Party's narratives around politics and history. The government has also demanded that artists align their creative visions with the Party's goals and has encouraged comics to promote a nationalist vision.

The song Mr. Guo performed in July was "Playing My Beloved Pipa," which refers to a traditional musical instrument and describes the heroics of Chinese guerrilla fighters against Japanese forces during the second Sino-Japanese war of 1937 to 1945. It was written for a well-known 1950s movie, "Railway Guerrilla," which shared a name with the Chinese armed forces. In 2019, it was included in a list of 100 songs the Communist Party's Central Committee named to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China.

According to media reports and videos of the performance posted online, Mr. Guo changed a line of lyrics: "The sun is about to set in the west; all is quiet on Weishan Lake." He replaced the lake with "the Forbidden City," a Beijing palace that was once the country's political center. He also added other humorous lines, in which he pretended to pray to Buddha.

Mr. Guo had received the necessary approvals for his performance, but had not indicated that he would be changing the lyrics, The Paper reported, citing Wuhan officials.

The Communist Party is increasingly sensitive to depictions of history that stray from officially sanctioned narratives; the slander of China's martyrs and heroes was made a crime in 2021 under an amended criminal code and has been enforced zealously since.

Jian Xu, an associate professor at Deakin University in Melbourne, Australia, who studies China's digital culture and celebrity politics, said that Mr. Guo's case highlighted how the "denigration and desecration" of revolutionary heroes or classic art and literature that celebrated Communist history could receive strong condemnation from the public and the government.

In addition, it reflected how "celebrities are increasingly subject to moral governance by both the public and the state and are expected to promote 'positive energy' and socially approved values," Mr. Xu said.

Chinese comedians have come under increasing scrutiny from the government and audiences in recent years. In 2023, a Chinese comedy studio was fined $2 million because Li Haoshi, a popular comedian, compared two stray dogs chasing a squirrel to the military. Announcing that penalty, officials urged artists and writers to have "correct creative thinking" and "provide healthy spiritual nourishment for the people." Following that episode, comedy clubs around China canceled shows.

Mr. Guo was said to have received the necessary approvals for his performance but had not indicated that he would be changing the lyrics.

Online, some argued that Mr. Guo should be punished because appropriating and satirizing a revolutionary song was a severe matter. But others wondered if the outrage was disproportionate to the scale of his transgression.

Hu Xijin, the former editor of the Communist Party-run Global Times newspaper, said in a social media post that, although he found Mr. Guo's version of the song "uncomfortable and inappropriate," he was unsure how severe the matter was. "Those in our arts and literature scene who dare to maliciously cross the line are few and far in between," he wrote in a post on Weibo, where he has nearly 25 million followers.

"To assume that such people are everywhere, and to give the harshest punishment to anyone who steps out of line to make an example out of them, is an error of judgment," he added.

Siyi Zhao contributed research.

A nuclear turning point comes to the screen

NUCLEAR, FROM PAGE 1

reminder that in an age of polarization even vast divisions can be bridged.

Somehow, the world's most famous cold warrior, the man who had condemned the Soviet Union as an "evil empire" that would be left on "the ash heap of history," found himself in a room with the leader of international communism. And the two agreed that it was time to step back from the precipice of planetary destruction.

"You don't know if you're going to find common ground or not until you do," said Michael Russell Gunn, who wrote the film and made his feature film directorial debut. "I want to encourage people to have courage to talk to one another."

Mr. Gunn's movie seeks to make two days of talking into a gripping drama. The film revolves almost entirely around these two leaders, presenting them as fully realized flesh-and-blood figures struggling to overcome profound differences during a weekend at Hofdi House in Reykjavik.

There was, indeed, something cinematic about the real-life Reykjavik meeting. Unlike nearly every other presidential summit, the two leaders sat down without a set agenda and without a pre-agreed outcome. Dispensing with talking points and entourages, they spent more than 10 hours together over the weekend of Oct. 11-12, 1986, talking, arguing, cajoling, needling, haggling and even dreaming. At one point, Mr. Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev decided the United States and the Soviet Union should give up their nuclear weapons — all of them.

"The Brink of War" was shot in Iceland, in the house used for the 1986 summit, with Mr. Daniels, Mr. Harris and Mr. Simmons sitting at the same modest walnut table in the same modest room where Mr. Reagan, Mr. Gorbachev and Mr. Shultz sat along with Eduard Shevardnadze, the Soviet foreign minister.

Mr. Daniels made a point of visiting the house the day before shooting started and just sitting there for a couple hours going over lines and absorbing the history. "You can feel it," he said. "There's a presence."

Mr. Gunn received an alarmed call telling him that Mr. Daniels was at the house. "I get this frantic call from the gaffer," Mr. Gunn recalled. " 'Jeff's here! He's in the chair, like in the dark in the room!' And I was like, 'Leave! Get out of there! Leave him be!' And he was just there to like soak it in."

By legend, Hofdi House, built in 1909, is haunted by the ghosts either of Viking warriors or a woman who died there called "the White Lady." The British ambassador in the 1950s was spooked enough to force his ministry to sell the property. Mr. Harris said he never saw any spirits, but joked, "I think the ghost stole my beanie hat, which you know you need in Iceland."

The White Lady's accommodations were so small that the C.I.A. and K.G.B. officers who accompanied the leaders quarreled over who got the better bathroom, negotiators drafted documents while sitting on plywood on top of a bathtub and a Reagan aide had to crouch on the floor next to the president's knees during a staff meeting in a secure room. U.S. and Soviet military officers carrying the two nuclear footballs, which could be used to launch world-ending strikes, stood at attention near each other outside the negotiating room.

Mr. Daniels's Reagan is not the "Saturday Night Live" version, but a serious figure, at once idealistic yet stubborn, mindful of his brush with death at the hands of a would-be assassin five years earlier and determined to use his additional lease on life to end the nightmare of nuclear Armageddon.

"It was life or death. There were 70,000 nuclear weapons pointed at each other, and nothing to stop them."

To that end, the moviemakers did not press the physical likeness too much. "We could have put plastic cheekbones," Mr. Daniels said. "We could have redone my whole face with plastics." But, he added, "you push the audience away, so that's what they see are all the externals."

Instead, he said, he focused on Mr. Reagan's voice and mannerisms, the cocking of the head. "I had a hook for me, which got me into it, which was the way he said the word, 'well,' " he said, adopting Mr. Reagan's husky voice for a moment. "You land that, it's like a hook in a fish."

Until the 1986 meeting, the history of arms control talks between the United States and the Soviet Union had all been about slowing the growth of their mutual nuclear arsenals. But there in that whiteboard house on the edge of nowhere the American president and Soviet general secretary decided for the first time to actually reduce the number of nuclear weapons in the world. And they got so excited at one point that they agreed to abolish all of their nuclear weapons.

The unexpected grand bargain fell apart at the last minute over Mr. Gorbachev's insistence that Mr. Reagan give up plans to try to build a nuclear shield in the form of a missile defense system called the Strategic Defense Initiative, or S.D.I. in the jargon of the day or "Star Wars" to the skeptics. Reagan refused and the two men took leave of each other angry and disappointed.

But what seemed like a letdown changed the course of history and set their two countries on a path toward the destruction of tens of thousands of nuclear warheads. Barely a year later, Mr. Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev signed the first agreement eliminating a whole category of nuclear weapons, the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, or I.N.F., which led to subsequent pacts negotiated or ratified by George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama bringing down nuclear stockpiles even further.

"It started a precipitous decline in nuclear weapons," Ken Adelman, who served as the director of the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency and had to sit at Mr. Reagan's knees at Reykjavik, said in an interview.

When Mr. Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev met, the Soviet Union had more than 40,000 nuclear warheads and the United States more than 23,000, according to the Federation of American Scientists. Russia now has about 4,400 and the United States about 3,700, or collectively about 13 percent of the Reykjavik-era totals.

Today, however, the world appears heading in a different direction. President Trump withdrew from the I.N.F. treaty in 2019, citing Russian cheating, and the New Start treaty signed by Mr. Obama, the last legal limit on the size of the nuclear arsenals, lapsed in February. While Mr. Trump has talked about brokering a new three-way treaty with both Russia and China, he has done little to actually pursue it.

Mr. Adelman, who chronicled the summit in his 2014 book "Reagan at Reykjavik" and issued a revised version this summer adopting the film's name, "The Brink of War," said Mr. Gunn's film captured "the tension in the room."

The improvisational approach the two leaders took, he recalled, stunned everyone. "It was going to be a come-as-you-are, a grip-and-grin summit," Mr. Adelman said. "We were shocked out of our minds that Gorbachev was ready to roll. He wanted something done."

As for Mr. Reagan, Mr. Adelman said, he too proved something. "What was surprising to me at Reykjavik was how antinuclear Reagan was," he said. "I didn't know that. We were mocking the bante-bomb guys. "

Mr. Adelman said that while Mr. Reagan's original S.D.I. vision was fantasy at the time and still has not yet emerged decades later, he paved the way for a future focused on defensive weapons, which in recent years have shown their worth in missile systems like Israel's Iron Dome and America's Patriots.

Mr. Gunn said he became interested in telling the story of Reykjavik when he was introduced to Mr. Shultz at Stanford's Hoover Institution. He ultimately dedicated the movie to the former secretary of state, who died at 100 in 2021. "He said even he didn't truly believe that the Soviet Union could end," Mr. Gunn said. "It was only Reagan that had this kind of leap of imagination."

Mr. Daniels said he hopes the film will inspire others to make a similar leap. "I would like to think that the leaders of the world today would have the courage to do what these two guys tried to do back in 1986," he said. "Get into a room and figure out how to make us a safer world for all of us."

RONALD REAGAN LIBRARY/GETTY IMAGES

FINN HUWALD/PICTURE ALLIANCE, VIA GETTY IMAGES

RON EDMONDS/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Above from left: the Soviet leader Mikhail S. Gorbachev, at left, facing President Ronald Reagan during the first day of the summit to discuss arms control in Reykjavik, Iceland; the Hofdi House, where the meeting took place; and the two leaders shaking hands.

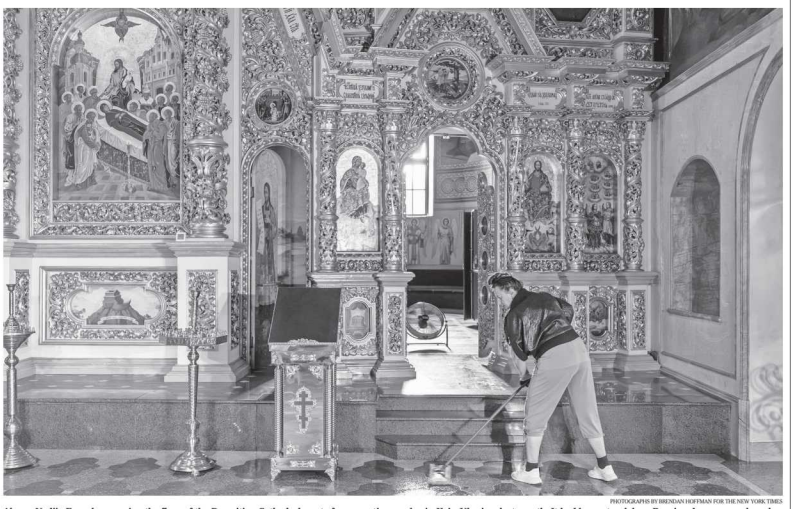
World

After drone strike, famed site gets revival

KYIV DISPATCH
KYIV, UKRAINE

Community in Ukraine rallies to clean up cathedral ahead of anniversary event

BY CARLOTTA GALL
AND STANISLAV KOZLIUK



PHOTOGRAPHS BY BRENDAN HOFFMAN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Above, Nadiia Fesenko mopping the floor of the Dormition Cathedral, part of a monastic complex in Kyiv, Ukraine, last month. It had been struck by a Russian drone several weeks earlier. Below from left: volunteers loading bags of leaves and branches into a truck as they help clean the grounds; and platters of food provided to volunteers for lunch.

There was a bustle on a recent morning on the quiet grounds of Kyiv's oldest monastery, as volunteers gathered beside Orthodox priests with hoes and rakes to assist in a grand cleanup.

Mostly parishioners, military veterans and charity workers, the volunteers had answered a call from the head of the monastery after a Russian drone struck the Dormition Cathedral, at the center of the monastic complex, in June.

It is unclear whether the drone, which was part of a broader bombardment of Ukraine's capital, had intentionally targeted the cathedral. Still, the strike damaged one of its golden domes and set the roof ablaze.

"I cried when I saw the Dormition Cathedral was on fire," said Olha Mukha, an economics teacher and parishioner who lives nearby and came to help. "For our enemy, there are no sacred places," she said.

The cathedral is part of the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra preserve, an extensive complex of churches, monastic buildings and ancient catacombs perched above the Dnipro River. The preserve is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a revered place of pilgrimage.

The volunteers gathered last month to clean up the site ahead of its 975th anniversary, which President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine and other dignitaries celebrated on Saturday.

Founded in the 11th century, the monastery was home to 1,000 monks at its height and drew patrons among royalty, politicians and pilgrims. Its catacombs house underground churches and the bodies and relics of 120 saints.

After Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the monastery became the center of a standoff between dozens of resident monks who follow the Moscow Orthodox patriarchate, and Ukrainian monks who adhere to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, which split off in 2018.

Abbot Makariy, 45, who leads the nearby monastery of St. Theodosius and who is set on claiming the entire preserve for the Ukrainian church, was one of the first on the scene on the night of the Russian strike. He recorded his dismay as he filmed the conflagration with his cellphone from an adjacent bell tower. The footage went viral.

He also filmed as he ran into the burning church. "There was nobody there: no firefighters, nobody," he recalled. His voice in the footage relayed shock: "Poor Dormition," he said as he filmed. "Everything is burning."

The devastation was particularly painful, he said, because of the effort that had gone into building the cathedral. It was leveled in 1941 during World War II and rebuilt only in 2000, after the Soviet Union fell and Ukraine gained independence.

In June, the cathedral escaped major destruction. The strike tore chunks of brick out of the masonry and set the roof ablaze, but emergency workers prevented the flames from spreading, officials at the complex said.

"I cried when I saw the Dormition Cathedral was on fire. For our enemy, there are no sacred places."

On a recent visit, the cathedral roof was encased in plastic sheeting and the windows of its cupolas were boarded up. A burning smell lingered in the dimly lit interior, as portable fans whirred at full speed to dry out walls that had been soaked by firefighters' hoses.

The ornate iconostasis, a gilded screen — the largest in Ukraine — concealing the sanctuary, survived intact. Priests rescued valuable artifacts, icons and religious utensils, including a heavy silver coffin encasing a relic of St. Stephen, which is now in a nearby museum building, museum officials said.

Ivan Yahovenko, a deputy director at the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra preserve, said Ukraine's culture ministry was considering plans to build a stronger roof covering to protect the cathedral from snow through the winter. Reconstruction work would depend on funding, he said.

But even as air raid sirens and explosions sounded in Kyiv, Abbot Makariy was moving on, intent on readying the cathedral and the preserve for the anniversary event.

"We are going to open the catacombs for the first time in three years, and there is a big mess down there," he said last month, ahead of the clean up.

With only 30 monks in his monastery, he had appealed to volunteers, among them military veterans who have been encouraged to use the space as a refuge and place of healing. Over three days, they cut and cleared overgrown gardens and courtyards and weeded the cobbled pathways.

Parishioners laid out plates of sandwiches for lunch. Then teams of women armed with buckets and mops set about cleaning the cathedral, some climbing up to the choir gallery and others mopping the marble floor over and over.

"This is an incredibly difficult time for all of us," said Liudmyla Balashova, 56, a director at a textile firm in Kyiv, who paused to say a prayer. "We need to prove, perhaps to ourselves above all, that with God's help we can overcome anything."

Convulsions, delirium and death in an Ebola ward

**RWAMPARA,
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO**

In a Congolese clinic, medics battle to save lives in challenging conditions

PHOTOGRAPHS AND ARTICLE
BY FINBARR O'REILLY

Top, a doctor treating Justin Bataga Mugarwa at a clinic in Rwampara in Democratic Republic of Congo. Despite treatment, Mr. Mugarwa, 42, died from Ebola. Above, passing medicine to a doctor in the clinic's Red Zone, where Ebola patients are treated.

On one side of the Ebola ward, a woman visiting her ailing husband spoke to him through a plexiglass window. He had spent two days at the ward recovering from the virus and, after his first negative test, expected soon to be discharged.

A few yards away, Congolese doctors struggled to insert needles into the collapsed veins of Justin Bataga Mugarwa, a gold miner whose condition was rapidly deteriorating.

Mr. Mugarwa, 42, had been at the ward for nearly a week, and his sudden decline began with delirium, followed by convulsions so violent that doctors dragged his mattress and their patient onto the floor to prevent a fall.

"I'm not sure how long he can last like this," said one doctor observing Mr. Mugarwa's condition through the plastic window as fellow doctors dressed in full protective gear fought to save him.

The distance between life and death is razor thin at clinics like this one in Rwampara, just outside Bunia, the capital of Ituri province and the heart of the Ebola outbreak ravaging eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.

The recently built outdoor Ebola ward, run by the medical charity Alima, has treated 849 Ebola patients, 328 of whom have died from the virus as of this month.

The ward was hastily put together, made from temporary wood frame structures with corrugated metal roofs. Only infected patients and health workers in protective clothing are allowed to enter the "Red Zone," where medicine and supplies are passed down a slide.

When exiting the Red Zone, medical staff are sprayed with chlorinated water as they remove their masks, yellow suits, gloves and hoods.

They take care to avoid contact with any potentially contaminated surfaces. The disposable yellow suits and protective hoods are burned while gloves and boots are sterilized by a team of support workers.

Recovering patients share rooms while awaiting two negative tests within 48 hours before they can be discharged. Single isolation rooms are reserved for patients in critical condition, like Mr. Mugarwa.

On a recent afternoon, doctors spent hours attempting to administer intravenous fluids and medication to him. Mr. Mugarwa's severe dehydration made inserting needles into his veins impossible.

He vomited blood. His internal organs failed. One of the doctors treating him slumped on the metal bed frame and stared down at Mr. Mugarwa as his breathing slowed.

Then it stopped. He was gone.

This outbreak has killed more than 2,325 people since May, according to the Congolese government. The organization said last week that the outbreak is on track to surpass the deadliest one in history, which killed more than 11,000 people over a decade ago. Local health officials fear the virus could be mutating.

Health workers in Rwampara had long struggled to treat Congolese facing violence, hunger, and preventable diseases. Then came Ebola. Mortality rates associated with this epidemic hover at nearly 46 percent.

Mr. Mugarwa's niece, Rebecca, also died from Ebola at the ward that afternoon.

His wife and one of his three sons, both of whom had been under observation, fled the clinic upon learning of his death.

"We are shocked because he has been here almost a week and we thought he was improving," said one of Mr. Mugarwa's seven brothers, Prospere Kondjedo, when the family arrived at the clinic the following day. "When we got here this morning, we went to where he had been, and all we saw were his clothes and his telephone. He is no longer there."

Some 100 health workers have contracted the virus overall, and at least 36 have died, according to health officials. In mid-June, one of the doctors at the ward tested positive for Ebola after flying to Paris.

After the doctor fell ill, Congo's government imposed a 21-day international travel ban for anyone leaving Ituri Province, potentially impeding the response, aid organizations said, before the ban was eased.

In July, dozens of health workers and support staff in Rwampara went on strike, part of a wider strike in the province over unpaid wages. Ebola patients were left at the clinic without care for days until staff were assured by Congo's health ministry that late salaries would be paid.

Mr. Mugarwa and his niece were buried at a cemetery across the road from the clinic the day after they died. Two body bags were carried from the morgue, placed into coffins and loaded onto a vehicle for transportation.

Mr. Kondjedo, the brother, and around a dozen other family members gathered as the coffins were lowered into graves. Earth was shoveled atop the caskets and mourners sang their farewells.

Trump ends ambiguity in attacks on global court

BY AMANDA TAUB

The United States has always had a tricky relationship with the International Criminal Court, which tries people accused of war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity.

It helped create the court but never joined the tribunal, partly because of fears that such a move would expose Americans, especially those in the military, to politically motivated prosecutions. Many U.S. politicians, particularly on the right, have treated it as a threat.

And yet at times, the United States has been one of the court's most important partners. It has provided intelligence, diplomatic aid and other support when doing so served U.S. interests.

Under the Trump administration, however, the relationship has shifted from complicated to outright hostile.

On Tuesday, the Trump administration imposed sanctions on the president of the court, as well as a senior trial lawyer in the prosecutor's office. That brings the total number of court officials under U.S. sanctions to 13.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio has gone even further, announcing that the United States intends to dismantle the I.C.C. — "brick by brick, if necessary" — including by pressuring member states to leave the court. Within days of that announcement last month, Venezuela announced its exit, followed by Chad.

The administration's targeting of an international institution is not new. But the I.C.C. seems particularly vulnerable.

The court is almost entirely dependent on a delicate, consensus-based system of norms to do its work. The Trump administration has often been hostile to that system, let alone any suggestion that the U.S. should abide by its rules.

The pressure on the court has risen sharply in President Trump's second term, after it issued arrest warrants for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel and at least one other Israeli official. That raises a very real question: Can the I.C.C. survive the Trump era?

The relationship has shifted from complicated to outright hostile.

The I.C.C. can function effectively only when states cooperate. Member states have a treaty obligation to assist the court, but if they don't, there is little the I.C.C. can do. And yet until now, states have often helped the court — because international norms demanded it, and because the reputational harm of refusing would be severe.

Now, the United States is taking direct aim at those norms.

Venezuela, for example, remained a member state after the I.C.C. prosecutor's decision in 2021 to investigate whether its government had committed crimes against humanity. So observers took note when it withdrew last month — perhaps because of U.S. pressure, or because the U.S. assault on the court gave its leaders cover, or possibly some combination of the two.

"Some countries that might otherwise support the court will now find it too costly to do so," if the United States imposes consequences on those that remain, said Kate Cronin-Furman, who studies human rights in international affairs. Others that already wanted to pull out may now find it easier.

Countries that strongly support the I.C.C.'s mission, and oppose Mr. Trump's foreign policy, will probably increase their support for the court, she said.

But that support may not help in the long run. One of the biggest challenges for the I.C.C. has been combating the perception that it's just another vehicle for politics. That challenge will only grow if the I.C.C. comes to be seen as an anti-Trump institution, rather than a neutral arbiter of justice.

If the I.C.C. is damaged or even destroyed, the world won't feel the consequences immediately. The court has tried only a small number of cases since its founding in 2002.

But the indirect consequences, for the cause of international justice and the principles of the international order, would be more significant, experts say.

The I.C.C. is a small but important part of a broader project that says that the conduct of international affairs should be guided by laws and rules, rather than simply power. It's a project the Trump administration has long argued ties the hands of one of the world's most powerful countries.

Countries were already "de-prioritizing" their commitments to international justice, said Alex Whiting, a law professor at Harvard University in Massachusetts. That is partly because of other, more pressing issues. But there is also more general loss of faith in international solutions and institutions, he said.

Because the court is an organization built on belief — in trust in a now-fading system — there may ultimately be no need for the Trump administration to dismantle it brick by brick. It has already undermined the structures that made the I.C.C. possible; if they start to collapse, that might well be enough.

WORLD

Trump reverts to economic pressure on Iran

NEWS ANALYSIS
BERLIN

U.S. options are few, but Tehran has endured sanctions for decades

BY STEVEN ERLANGER

ARASH KHAMOOSHI/POLARIS FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

The Tajrish Bazaar in Tehran. Iran's economy is damaged, but its leaders have shown, through crackdowns on dissent, that they are relatively unconcerned with public opinion.

Iran has survived harsh U.S. sanctions since 1979. It is betting it can endure even more.

In the 47 years since the Islamic Revolution, the United States has taken step after step to isolate the country with only a brief reprieve after the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, which President Trump excoriated and abandoned in 2018.

Mr. Trump promised "maximum pressure" then, and now, with limited military options, threatens even more. On Wednesday, Mr. Trump vowed to impose "tremendous economic consequences" on countries that do business with Iran.

Mr. Trump did not specify in his social media post what actions he would take, and the White House did not immediately respond to questions on the matter. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent warned last week of "never before seen" measures to pressure Iran — perhaps, analysts suggest, secondary sanctions on countries like China that buy Iranian oil, or further penalties on financial transactions.

Iran is more likely to step up attacks on American allies in the Persian Gulf than to surrender its hold on the Strait of Hormuz, analysts said. "Iran's economy is in serious trouble, but it is not collapsing," said Danny Citrinowicz, an Israeli expert on Iran. "More importantly, the regime is likely to escalate before it capitulates."

U.S. and international sanctions and economic pressure did help lead to the 2015 nuclear deal, when the supreme leader then, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, authorized negotiations to limit Iran's nuclear program in return for frozen assets and sanction relief.

Since Mr. Trump withdrew from the deal and imposed more sanctions, Iran has adjusted to a high level of economic disruption, developing sophisticated smuggling routes and new markets, particularly for oil. For now, Iran insists on maintaining effective control of the strait while the American Navy continues to blockade it. A few ships are slipping through, but traffic is down more than 90 percent from before the war.

Iran's economy is badly damaged, hurting ordinary people, but its leaders have shown, through brutal crackdowns on protest and dissent, that they are relatively unconcerned with public opinion.

Having survived what it once feared — an Israeli-American war against it — a more military-minded and authoritarian Islamic Republic has itself doubled down. Esmail Baghaei, the spokesman for the foreign ministry, said on Monday that new measures would have "no effect on Iran's position."

Economic pressure will only succeed if "our resilience is greater than that of the Iranian regime, and it's not clear that's a good bet," said Suzanne Maloney, an Iran expert and director of foreign policy at the Brookings Institution. "Iran's economy has been shaped by U.S. economic pressure."

THE OIL ECONOMY

Iran's economy is suffering, without question, but gradually, while the regime keeps a stranglehold on any popular protest.

Since the war began in earnest in February, the Iranian economy and its industrial sector have been contracting in tandem for the first time in eight years, said Esfandyar Batmanghelidj, chief executive of the Bourse & Bazaar Foundation, a research organization based in London.

Iran will face more challenges, from higher inflation to weakness in the job market, he said. "But it won't lead to a different political outcome."

Some Iranian leaders, to be sure, are deeply concerned with the economic disaster and support a more rapid diplomatic deal with Washington. But the leadership appears united in retaining effective control over the strait as its best leverage and deterrent against another war.

Iran has adapted to American and international sanctions by increasing its ties to Russia and China. It sells most of its oil at a discount to China, which has ignored international sanctions against the purchase of Iranian oil. It also uses small, independent Chinese refineries, known as "teapots," that are less exposed to American sanctions.

Iran has developed smuggling networks and a "shadow fleet," transferring its oil to other ships that can easily disguise its origin. And it has built up its industrial sector and cut back sharply on imports and its use of the dollar, using foreign banks and bartering oil for goods.

Since the war and the American blockade, Iran has been storing oil onshore and in a variety of older tankers, while shipping some of it by road and rail and reducing output on some wells. When the memorandum of understanding with the United States was signed in June and the American blockade was temporarily lifted, Iran used the period of calm assiduously.

Iran had oil already outside the strait to sell before the blockade, and at the outset of the agreement it exported another 80 million barrels before Washington reimposed sanctions and the blockade, said Brett Erickson of Obsidian Risk Advisors.

Before the war, Iran was exporting about 1.8 million barrels a day. Now, given the increase in the oil price, Iran is ahead of what it budgeted for oil sales for this year, he said.

The exchange rate for the Iranian rial against the dollar is bad, but the speed of depreciation is slowing, as is inflation. If Washington is relying on economic pressure, "you wouldn't want slower inflation and a lower rial exchange rate than before the war," Mr. Erickson said.

For the policy to succeed, "we need to push them down quickly, not wait nine more years to collapse them," he added. "A dagger hurts but doesn't lop off the head of the enemy."

A BATTLE OF ECONOMIC WILLS

Iran is gambling that the closure of the strait will put more pressure on Mr. Trump to blink first and negotiate a deal that Iran can accept. Tehran is counting on increasing economic anxiety from America's allies to push Mr. Trump back to the table.

The global economy is missing millions of barrels of oil a day and strategic stockpiles, including in Europe and the United States, are badly diminished. Ukraine continues to damage Russia's refineries, further cutting the amount of oil on the market.

Regionally, key energy producers like Qatar, Bahrain, Iraq and Kuwait are badly hurt by the closure of the strait, and Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Oman have argued in Washington against further military escalation, given Iran's ability to strike their energy infrastructure.

Iran has adjusted to a high level of economic disruption, developing new smuggling routes and new markets.

"In a battle of economic wills it's very uncertain the West will win," Ms. Maloney of the Brookings Institution said.

Mr. Trump defends the war as necessary to ensure that Iran can never build a nuclear weapon. But after he abandoned the 2015 nuclear deal, Iran tried to pressure the world with enhanced enrichment that brought it to the edge of being a nuclear-capable military power, even as it denied ever seeking a bomb.

That assurance died with the former supreme leader. His son and successor, Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei, appears ready for open-ended confrontation with America and is considered by U.S. intelligence to be more flexible about creating a nuclear weapon. In Iran, said Vali Nasr, an Iran expert and professor at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, trust in Mr. Trump is minimal and the 2015 deal is considered "a fourletter word."

Now, Mr. Trump is offering Iran very little in exchange for opening the Strait of Hormuz, with no U.S. commitment to unfreeze its assets or lift sanctions. "There is no reasonable deal for Iran on the table," Mr. Nasr said.

"The choice is between total surrender and fighting it out," he added. "And they have bet that the only way to get a better deal is to accept costs now and hold the global economy's and Trump's feet to the fire."

U.S. Navy helps to move oil through Strait of Hormuz

Military shepherds tankers on routes close to Oman while fending off attacks

BY PETER EAVIS AND JOHN ISMAY

U.S. NAVY, VIA GETTY IMAGES

NATALIE NACCACHE FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

U.S. NAVY, VIA ASSOCIATED PRESS

Clockwise from above: the U.S.S. Abraham Lincoln conducting operations related to the Strait of Hormuz in April; the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company headquarters; and Diego Garcia, a British territory in the Indian Ocean serving as a logistics hub for the U.S. Navy.

Only a few oil tankers braved Iran's attacks to go through the Strait of Hormuz for much of the war, leading to a drastic reduction in how much crude reached world markets.

But since May, the U.S. military has played a crucial role in getting millions of barrels of oil through the strait, helping to keep oil prices from rising further.

The operation stealthily shepherds tankers through the southern part of the strait on routes close to Oman. Iran effectively controls which ships go through its side of the strait, opposite Oman.

Before the war, about 15 million barrels of crude oil a day went through the Strait of Hormuz. In July, tankers using U.S. protected routes transported around five million barrels of oil daily out of the Persian Gulf, according to analysts.

"It's one of the surprising successes," said Michelle Wiese Bockmann, a shipping analyst at Windward, a maritime analysis firm. "They have been extraordinarily effective in keeping that southern corridor operating, despite the attacks."

But the U.S. effort, which Iran opposes, has come at a cost. The U.S. military is deploying significant resources to get a limited amount of oil through the strait — something it did not have to do before the war, when tankers sailed freely through the waterway.

"It's extremely labor intensive to provide for that kind of persistent defense," said Joshua Tallis, an analyst at the Center for Naval Analyses.

To try to protect vessels on the southern corridor, Central Command uses a range of weapons that can intercept Iranian drones and missiles. Ship operators say they register any planned trips through the strait with the U.S. military and then report possible threats or attacks as they occur. The United States uses ships, helicopters and planes to launch weapons to intercept attacks. It has helped over 1,000 ships transit the strait, according to Central Command.

The U.S. tanker protection operation has drawn attacks by Iran. At least 15 ships taking the southern routes have been hit since the start of June, injuring 16 mariners and killing two, according to a New York Times analysis of data collected by the International Maritime Organization, a part of the United Nations. Another ship was struck this week while it was sailing close to Oman, killing a crew member, the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations, an entity administered by Britain's Royal Navy, said on Tuesday.

The Iranian military retains the ability to escalate its attacks on all shipping in the area, as well as on oil and gas facilities in Gulf countries. And Iran is demanding permanent control over ship traffic in the strait, something it did not have before the war.

"They have been extraordinarily effective in keeping that southern corridor operating."

"Iran's threat over the strait will remain significant for the foreseeable future," said Mona Yacoubian, a director of the Middle East Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a research organization.

Many large shipping companies have chosen to stay away from the strait until there is a lasting cease-fire.

The tanker protection effort in the southern corridor is one of the two major U.S. operations aimed at loosening Iran's grip on the strait. The other is a U.S. Navy blockade of ships visiting Iranian ports, which has greatly restricted Iranian oil leaving the gulf and deprived Tehran of much-needed oil revenue.

Helping the tankers get out through the southern corridor increases the supply of crude to world markets and reduces the likelihood of oil prices' spiking to the heights they reached earlier in the war. Gulf oil is also bypassing the strait by being pumped in greater volumes through Middle Eastern pipelines.

Ms. Wiese Bockmann, the shipping analyst, said the amount of oil going through had been rising since May, when the tanker protection initiative began. Roughly four million barrels a day exited in June, rising to some five million a day in July, she said.

Ships that navigated the strait with the assistance of Central Command, the U.S. military unit running the operation, typically turn off their transponders to avoid detection by Iran. That makes it harder for firms that track vessels to get a full picture of traffic in the strait.

A small number of shipping operators have been willing to use the Oman route. One of those is Dynacom, a Greek company. Two of its tankers were hit on July 19, one of which was abandoned, according to the International Maritime Organization. Dynacom did not respond to requests for comment.

The United Arab Emirates' government-owned oil giant, the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company, or ADNOC, is making considerable efforts to move oil on the southern route. Its vessels have been frequently struck. ADNOC said last week that 18 of its vessels had been attacked in the war, resulting in one fatality and 20 injuries to crew members.

"We take extensive measures to protect our people and our assets and adapt our operations to the evolving security environment," a spokesman for ADNOC's logistics arm said in a statement, declining to say whether the company's ships go through with U.S. protection.

Resupplying those missions has become far more challenging since the Navy's base in Manama, the capital of Bahrain, was effectively destroyed by Iranian attacks that began on the first day of the war. As a result of losing their main logistics hub in the Middle East, Navy supply ships now must travel to the tiny island of Diego Garcia — a British territory about 1,100 miles (1,770 kilometers) southwest of the southern tip of India. The journey takes more than five days each way.

The Navy has said it has about 20 warships in the Gulf of Oman, including the aircraft carriers Abraham Lincoln and George H.W. Bush, the destroyers escorting them, and even more destroyers enforcing President Trump's renewed blockade of Iranian ports.

How the Navy intends to keep such a large force of warships in the Middle East into the future is unclear, as all of the nearby ports in the region are within range of Iranian missiles. And although the service has more than 70 destroyers in the fleet, it has just 11 carriers. Not all of them are available to serve in the war, as some are undergoing maintenance in shipyards and one is scheduled for decommissioning next year.

The Lincoln, for one, has been at sea since Nov. 21 without a port call that would allow the crew to rest, and will need a significant amount of maintenance before it can deploy again. The Japan-based carrier George Washington is coming to relieve the Lincoln, but a relief for the Norfolk-based Bush — which deployed on March 31 — has not been publicly identified.

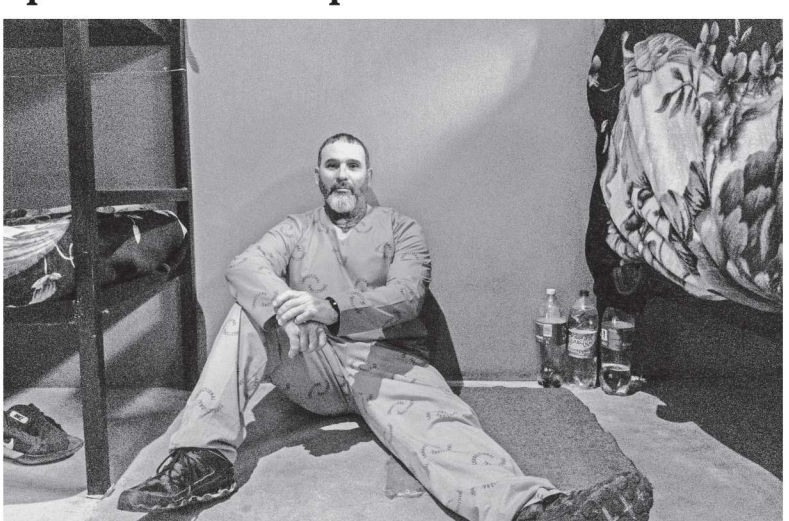
Fading hope in a far-off prison

DEPORTATION, FROM PAGE 1

offering millions of dollars — often without disclosing the payments — to foreign governments to take immigrants the United States was having trouble deporting to their countries of origin. This includes not only people with criminal pasts but also deportees who were under court protections not to be returned to their homelands because they faced threats there.

The practice of deporting someone to a so-called third country isn't new, but it used to be rare. But in 2019, the first Trump administration began sending thousands of foreign nationals to Mexico. In Trump's second term, the practice has vastly expanded: At least 35 countries have made deals to take deportees, a list that includes South Sudan, Ghana, Palau, Uzbekistan and Moldova, according to Third Country Deportation Watch, a monitoring group that tracks the agreements.

The deportations bring up serious legal questions that have been the subject of multiple federal lawsuits. The removals — whether they involve immigrants with criminal histories or not — often happen before deportees can argue their cases before a judge. Some of the countries selected by the Trump administration don't offer the basic legal protections to which the deportees would be entitled in the United States, such as access to a lawyer. And because they are foreign nationals, with no legal status in the countries to which they have been sent, the deportees generally remain under indefinite detention abroad, without charges and with little or no recourse in American courts. In a written statement to The Times, the Department of Homeland Security maintained that anyone who was deported received due process: "These third-country agreements, which ensure due process under the U.S. Constitution, are essential to the safety of our homeland and the American people."



PHOTOGRAPHS BY MOSES SAMAN/MAGNUM FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Clockwise from top: Roberto Mosquera at the Matsapha Correctional Complex in Eswatini; the exterior of the prison; and Mosquera's bunk, covered in a mosquito net. Before his deportation last year, Mosquera, 59, hadn't left the United States since he arrived from Cuba when he was 12. He had been working for a plumbing company in Miami.

The detention archipelago started growing last fall, when the Trump administration began directing flights to Ghana and Cameroon. Human rights lawyers said that this wave of deportees was made up of immigrants seeking asylum who were protected by court orders from being returned to the countries they had fled. Some were also covered under the Convention Against Torture, a United Nations treaty to which the United States is a signatory, which bans the deportation of people to a country where they were tortured or could face torture.

"They have legal protection, which means they cannot be deported to their country of origin, and the U.S. is exploiting that protection by deporting them to other countries instead," says Bella Mosselmans, director of the Global Strategic Litigation Council, a rights group that has filed multiple lawsuits in the United States and abroad over third-country deportations. "It is then enlisting those countries to detain and deport them back to their country of origin, where they face persecution, torture and worse." This workaround, known as chain refoulement, is banned under the Convention Against Torture.

But some never get out. They remain in the third countries, stuck in a kind of purgatory — a new class of prisoner created by America's widening crackdown on immigration.

Human rights lawyers I spoke to have identified at least two dozen cases in which people have been in long-term detention: the 19 men imprisoned in Eswatini and six or seven in South Sudan.

Alma David, who now represents some of the other deportees in Eswatini in addition to Mosquera, compared the situation of the Eswatini detainees to a legal black hole. "It's like you wake up, and you're in this place, and there's no way out," David said.

MOSQUERA ARRIVED IN America along with thousands of other Cubans, in Key West. His mother, Matilde del Peral, had been a political prisoner in Cuba, locked up for 18 months after she refused to attend meetings of the neighborhood Communist committee.

When Mosquera was about 14, he told me, another teenager started referring to their clique of friends as the Latin Kings. At first, they were mostly playacting, Mosquera said, getting into fistfights and hiding from local beat cops they knew. But things changed when

The deportations bring up serious legal questions that have been the subject of multiple federal lawsuits.

members of the real Latin Kings — a gang that began in the Puerto Rican community in Chicago — started to migrate to Miami.

Mosquera told me that in 1988 he was ambushed at a fairground by rival gang members, who knocked his teeth out with a set of brass knuckles. His gang decided to take revenge. One night in Coconut Grove, a neighborhood in Miami, they shot at a 16-year-old rival gangster, who was wounded in his leg.

Mosquera, who told me openly about many crimes he committed during his gang years, insisted he was not there that night. But fearing a life in prison if he stood trial, he took a plea deal for attempted first-degree murder and received a nine-year sentence. By 1996, Mosquera, then 26, had served his time. He thought he had a new life ahead of him, but as an undocumented immigrant, he was rearrested by immigration agents. Mosquera was caught in what is known as administrative detention — which, at the time, allowed immigrants to be held indefinitely before deportation. With Cuba still refusing to take deportees from the United States, Mosquera was held another six years, serving time in various prisons. A 2001 Supreme Court decision banned this practice, requiring the United States to release administrative detainees after six months if they cannot be deported.

Mosquera was finally released in 2002 under an agreement that would allow him to remain in the United States and work, while checking in regularly with immigration authorities. Raised Catholic, he became a born-again Christian in prison. He also left his gang, even though others who tried to do so had been killed, and started a family.

But he still found his way into trouble. Around 2009, after being pulled over by a police officer while riding his motorcycle, he tried to flee, resulting in criminal charges and three years' jail time. He told me that after his release, he was cited for two parole violations. But he began to put all that behind him. In 2014, Mosquera took a temporary job at a Miami plumbing company.

He rose from apprentice to plumber and eventually to foreman.

Mosquera often went to work with a hard hat emblazoned with a bald eagle, his former boss told me. Mosquera's sister de Ortiz told me she remembered Mosquera practically stumping for Trump. "He would sit on the patio and say, 'Trump is going to change everything, you'll see,'" she said.

AT THE MAXIMUM-SECURITY prison in Eswatini, the deportees were ordered to strip so they could be examined. Mosquera knew similar treatment from his years in American prisons, but this time he was indignant: He had committed no crime, he thought. The guards ordered a 24-hour lockdown for the prisoners. No calls, no lawyers.

After the Eswatini prisoners were barred from calling their families for a month, the warden brought a phone for the prisoners to use. Mosquera called his sister in Miami. "We'd been looking for him everywhere, and then he tells us he's in Africa," she said. With the help of his niece, Mosquera made contact with David. "I could see he was somebody who spent enough time in the U.S. criminal justice system to have a concept of what his rights were, and there was a process that had to be followed," David said. "He was like, You just can't do this to me."

Mosquera reached a breaking point in October, he said, when a flight carrying 10 deportees arrived. People were coming in faster than they were going, and he had no answers about what would come next.

Mosquera told the guards he would not eat until he could see a lawyer and was told why he was being held.

After Mosquera had gone nearly a month without food, his lawyer reached him through one of the prison guards' phones, urging him to stop the fast. She said he needed to be strong if they were going to fight, Mosquera told me.

Mosquera relented; the only other option was to starve himself to death, he said.

After he ended the hunger strike, the guards allowed him to purchase his own cellphone, using money he had been sent by relatives. It was a small victory, but far from the one he sought.

ONLY TWO DEPORTEES have managed to return to their countries of origin since arriving in Eswatini.

When I asked Mosquera to imagine a life back in Cuba, what he conjured was grim. "I'm a loudmouth, as you can see when we speak," he said. "If I was sent to Cuba, probably they'd lock me up too, just like they did to my mother."

As we continued to send messages, he told me about the end of his marriage, which came about after years of acrimony. His divorce was made official three days before he was deported, but he had always been close to his children, especially his 10-year-old daughter, Faith. Now he had stopped calling even her. "I need to get the hell out of here," he texted me. "My life is passing."

One morning in July, my phone buzzed. I could see Mosquera had sent me several shaky videos he had just filmed from the prison courtyard. In one, there was a convoy of four vehicles, including what looked like a military truck, entering the grounds. In another, 11 people filed past, some wearing white uniforms. One of them raised his fist in a gesture of resistance. A new group of prisoners had arrived, the third since Mosquera's flight last year.

I called Mosquera, and he began handing the phone to the new arrivals. They looked nervous on the video call. Like Mosquera, they said they had not heard of Eswatini before they arrived. All of them said they had criminal records — some for violent crimes — that had led to their deportations, but they had not expected to be sent to this corner of Africa.

Now Mosquera had work to do. He needed to show the new arrivals how to get money sent from home. Where they would wash their clothes. What to do when the power went out.

But what everyone really wanted to know was how long Mosquera had been in Eswatini.

"I tell them a year," he said. "And they get sick to their stomach."

This article was adapted from a story that appeared in The New York Times Magazine.

The childhood friends who turned out to be sisters

After being adopted from India, both were raised by Dutch families

BY CLAIRE MOSES

One evening this spring, Meena Geltink put her youngest child to bed and sat down on the couch with her partner, ready to have a cup of tea. Then she saw a Facebook message from a childhood friend that would change her life.

"Do you remember me?" wrote the friend, Minal Tijssen. It had been 15 years since the two had seen each other. Ms. Tijssen had included a screenshot from the genealogy website MyHeritage and asked whether Ms. Geltink had also received a notification from them.

Ms. Geltink, who was born in India and adopted by a family in the Netherlands in the 1980s, had been searching for biological family members since 2017, when she sent a DNA sample to MyHeritage. Because so many years had passed without a match, Ms. Geltink had deleted the app a few months earlier.

With shaking hands, she reinstalled it and promptly received the same notification as Ms. Tijssen. There it was: a DNA match. Ms. Geltink and Ms. Tijssen had the same parents.

"I burst into tears," Ms. Geltink said in a phone interview.

Ms. Geltink, 43, and Ms. Tijssen, 44, had first met as teenagers during an organized weekend for adopted children. They instantly struck up a friendship. "I saw her nose, her eyes: Everything looked like me," Ms. Geltink said.

Growing up in a small Dutch town, where almost everyone was white, Ms. Geltink said she had been "searching for my identity." Ms. Tijssen was raised less than 100 miles (160 kilometers) away. Both said they were close to their adopted families and had grown up with a brother.

"I've always been surrounded by many people who love me and who took care of me," Ms. Tijssen told Reuters. "But something inside of me, I've always felt very lonely."

While she had no proof, Ms. Geltink said she had long thought that she and Ms. Tijssen might be related. On a family vacation at a campsite in Austria, Ms. Geltink, then 13, was mistaken for Ms. Tijssen by a Dutch boy who turned out to be Ms. Tijssen's close friend from home.

Over time, as the sisters entered adulthood, Ms. Geltink and Ms. Tijssen lost touch and had not seen each other for years.

MARTA FOERN/REUTERS

Meena Geltink and Minal Tijssen met as teenagers during an organized weekend for adopted children in the Netherlands and instantly struck up a friendship.

That changed last week, when they had an emotional reunion as sisters in a park in the Dutch city of 's-Hertogenbosch, together with their partners and children.

"I don't feel alone anymore," Ms. Tijssen told Reuters. She declined to be interviewed for this article.

Tens of millions of people have taken consumer DNA tests in recent years and allowed their details to be kept on file. Sibling discoveries are not uncommon, but finding a biological family member in an adoptive country, and so close to home, is extremely rare, experts said.

Adoptees often look for biological family members in their countries of origin, which can be difficult because of differences in culture and language, said Jorge de Boer, a therapist in the Netherlands who assists adoptees from other countries.

Cultural gaps between biological relatives hoping to develop relationships are common, especially if they grew up in different countries, said Mr. de Boer, who was raised in the Netherlands after being adopted as a child. "And it's not always bridgeable just because you happen to be genetically related," he added.

Tens of thousands of children were brought to the Netherlands through adoption in the 20th century, but international adoption in the country has dwindled over the past two decades.

In 2021, the Netherlands temporarily halted all adoptions from abroad after an investigation found that the government had failed to act on known abuses, including child theft and trafficking, from 1967 to 1998.

In 2024, Dutch lawmakers voted to carefully phase out intercountry adoption over six years. The country's House of Representatives determined that adoption from other countries "no longer constitutes a sustainable solution for protecting the best interests of children," the government said when the change was announced.

Melissa Houben, a research and policy coordinator at INEA, a Dutch center for people who have been adopted from other countries, said the case of Ms. Geltink and Ms. Tijssen was extraordinary.

"A lot of people who were adopted grow up without anyone in their vicinity who looks like them," Ms. Houben said in a phone interview. "Recognizing yourself in another person is something surreal and indescribable."

Still, she said, such reunions can be laced with a wide range of emotions. "It can be a very beautiful thing, but also very intense," Ms. Houben said.

For Ms. Geltink, finding her sister felt as if a puzzle piece had fallen into place. But she said she also felt a profound loss.

"A sister is something really wonderful to have," she said. But all that time, she said, they could have been there for each other.

"We both felt that loneliness in our hearts — like you're always looking for something, but you don't know what," Ms. Geltink said. "We both had that feeling for years."

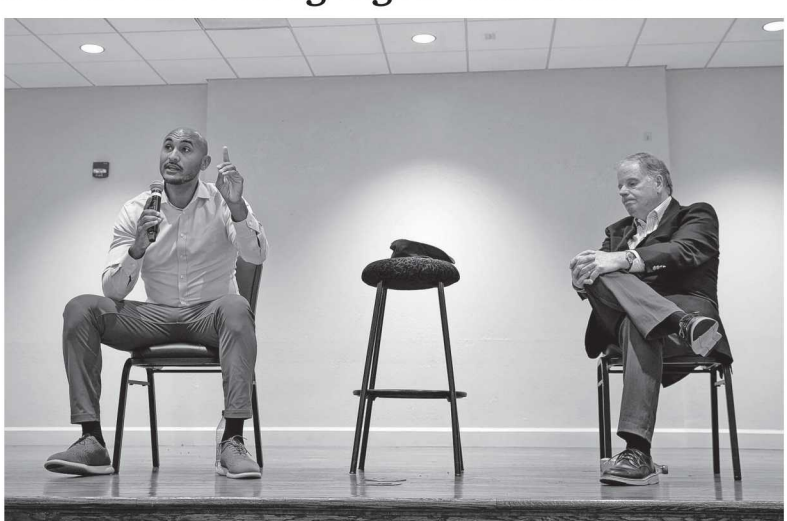
WORLD

Democrats look for voting rights backlash

TROY, ALA.

In Alabama and elsewhere, they hope to harness anger of Blacks on redistricting

BY EMILY COCHRANE



PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHARITY RACHELLE FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Shomari Figures, above at left, a representative, and Doug Jones, a former senator, at a political forum in Troy, Ala. Left, a voter with yard signs for Mr. Jones, who is running for governor of Alabama. Both candidates hope for a large turnout of Black voters.

Doug Jones, a former senator, and Shomari Figures, a current but endangered representative, have been here before in Alabama.

Mr. Jones lost his Senate seat in 2020 to Tommy Tuberville, a former college football coach, and now hopes to beat him in November in a contest for governor. Mr. Figures won a House district in 2024 that was redrawn to give Black voters more representation. Now he is confronting new district lines drawn explicitly to give his seat to a Republican.

Besides being Democrats, what both men have in common is a need for Alabama's Black voters to come out in November in overwhelming numbers, energized and angered, in part by the Supreme Court's decision in April that weakened the Voting Rights Act and set off a new wave of redistricting in the American South.

"They know that their vote is not counting the same way," Mr. Jones said of Black voters in an interview before a town hall in Troy, Ala., on Tuesday. He added, "People are paying attention to that, and they're not happy about it."

Voting rights are deeply personal in Alabama, where the state's white leaders spent the civil rights movement strenuously resisting their Black citizens' demands for a fair shake at the ballot box. The blood of those citizens helped galvanize Washington to enact the Voting Rights Act in 1965.

Then this spring, acting on a lawsuit in Louisiana, the Supreme Court freed Southern leaders from the act's strictures encouraging minority representation. Tennessee, Louisiana and Alabama all moved quickly to dilute districts with strong blocs of Black voters and tilt them toward the Republican Party.

Alabama's Legislature redrew the Second Congressional District where Mr. Figures's victory in 2024 gave the state two Black House members — Mr. Figures and Representative Terri Sewell — for the first time.

"Two was like giving candy to a baby — we were so happy, so excited," said Gwendolyn Davis, 67, as she prepared to leave the Troy town hall with a stack of yard signs. "And with one stroke of a pen from another state, the Supreme Court has reversed" that.

She added, "I will do whatever I can to make sure that people realize how important it is."

The new Second District was drawn to favor Republicans by pairing the majority-Black city of Montgomery with part of the southeastern Wiregrass region, making the new district whiter and more conservative. The old lines had stretched farther across the state, linking voters in Montgomery and part of Mobile to voters in the rural counties once farmed by slaves.

Both Mr. Tuberville and Rhett Marques, a Republican state representative running against Mr. Figures, supported the new congressional map and are favored to win their races. Even in a year without Mr. Trump on the ballot, Alabama remains deeply Republican.

Their campaigns, both backed by Mr. Trump, have worked to frame their Democratic opponents as extreme and out of touch. In a primary election night speech this month, Mr. Marques described the election as a choice between "craziness and common sense."

But Democrats say they have a chance, predicting that a backlash over the new congressional maps will energize Black voters as President Trump's sagging approval ratings demoralize white conservatives, many of whom might sit the election out.

That Democratic hope goes beyond Alabama and other Southern states directly affected by the voting rights decision. The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee on Wednesday launched digital advertisements in New York, Nebraska and Ohio House districts aimed at mobilizing Black voters, some of them explicitly invoking voting rights and the need for representation. Those ads followed a civil-rights-themed blitz last May in 21 House districts.

There is evidence that Black voters are indeed energized, though not necessarily over voting rights. In Wisconsin's Democratic primary for governor last week, David Crowley, Milwaukee County's Black executive, scored an astounding upset over a democratic socialist, Francesca Hong, who had been leading comfortably in the polls but struggling with Black voters. Black Milwaukee may well have made the difference.

A similar story played out in Michigan earlier this month, where Abdul El-Sayed, a progressive physician running for Senate, seemed to be cruising to a Democratic primary victory, despite troubles with Black voter support. In the end, he barely squeaked out a win over Representative Haley Stevens, who defied the polls and nearly scored an upset with Black support in Detroit and Flint.

For Mr. Jones and Mr. Figures, the civil rights theme is not a stretch. As a U.S. attorney in Birmingham, Mr. Jones helped prosecute two members of the Ku Klux Klan who bombed a church there in 1963 and killed four young Black girls.

Mr. Figures's father, Michael Figures, a state senator and civil rights lawyer, helped bring the lawsuit that bankrupted the Klan. Michael Figures also helped sue the state of Alabama over its congressional map in the 1990s, leading to the creation of the first majority-Black district in the state.

This campaign season, Mr. Figures and Mr. Jones have linked arms, joining each other in Troy and Montgomery for town halls this month where they challenged their state leaders.

"They have to do everything they can to reduce representation," Mr. Figures told the crowd in a ballroom at Troy University.

"They redrew my district in furtherance of that effort," he said. "But we're going to win it in November."

Mr. Jones has campaigned in several majority-Black counties, including rural Greene County, which has already shown signs of the energy that he will need. About 79 percent of Greene County is Black, and in the May primary, turnout was strikingly high.

Last month, Mr. Jones told a cluster of residents gathered at the Greene County courthouse that Alabama leaders were "going to draw district lines to make sure" that "your voice is not represented in the Congress of the United States."

"I think the Voting Rights Act is going to be an issue in this fall campaign," Mr. Jones added. "And I think people are energized."

Such sentiments carry risk. Some organizers cautioned that the new maps could also demoralize Black Alabamians.

"Each time that you take people's rights away like that, they're going to be discouraged and they're not going to want to go vote," said Marilyn Hobbs, who volunteers with a voter education organization in Montgomery. "We've got to knock on the doors."

Republicans in Wyoming reject the far right

Freedom Caucus hoped to sweep state contests, but voters veered to center

BY DAVID W. CHEN

The ultraconservatives in Wyoming's Freedom Caucus entered Tuesday's Republican primaries with visions of a clean sweep of the state government, from the governor's office to the State Senate and House.

Instead, the pendulum swung the other way — hard.

Republican voters in Wyoming rejected Freedom Caucus candidates who ran for governor, secretary of state and schools superintendent, siding with more mainstream conservative Republicans, The Associated Press reported.

In the primary to succeed the low-key outgoing governor, Mark Gordon, State Senator Eric Barlow, a rancher and veteran lawmaker, topped Megan Degenfelder, the schools superintendent who was endorsed by President Trump, and another hard-right candidate, Brent Bien, a retired Marine colonel backed by the Wyoming Republican Party.

At least a dozen Freedom Caucus incumbents were ousted from the Legislature, including three of the four leaders of the caucus in the State House. Among them was Chip Neiman, the House speaker who ran for State Senate.

Rather than seizing control of the state's upper chamber, the Freedom Caucus lost its majority in the House.

The results — a "near-total massacre," as Wyoming's Cowboy State Daily put it — were a stinging rebuke of the hard-right agenda and aggressive style that had propelled Wyoming in 2024 to become the United States' first such caucus to control a statehouse chamber.

The caucus had used that power to expand a voucher program to pay private school tuition and make Wyoming the first state to ban abortion pills, a law struck down by the State Supreme Court. But without a majority in the State Senate, it failed to enact deep cuts to the University of Wyoming, gut the state's economic development office or revamp the judiciary — prompting Mr. Neiman and others to run for Senate.

"Wyoming citizens spoke loud and clear tonight!" State Representative Landon Brown, a Republican and frequent Freedom Caucus critic, wrote on Facebook. "They want TRUE governance, not child's play."

The Freedom Caucus not only failed to take control of the State Senate, it lost its majority in the House.

Tuesday night's winners now advance to November's general election. Most will be heavily favored against Democrats in a Republican state that delivered President Trump his biggest margin of victory in 2024.

The wipeout of far-right candidates did not extend to federal offices. Harriet Hageman, who ousted one of Mr. Trump's fiercest Republican critics, Liz Cheney, to take Wyoming's lone U.S. House seat in 2022, on Tuesday easily won the Republican primary to succeed retiring U.S. Senator Cynthia Lummis. Chuck Gray, the current secretary of state, emerged first in a hard-fought, expensive and crowded primary to replace Ms. Hageman in the U.S. House.

But Cheyenne was another story.

In the Legislature, five state representatives who have identified with the Freedom Caucus tried to unseat more traditional Republicans in the State Senate. In the most highly anticipated showdown, Mr. Neiman lost to State Senator Ogden Driskill, a self-described "Reagan conservative" who has been in office since 2011.

In another notable race, State Representative Rachel Williams, the Freedom Caucus chairwoman who had urged Governor Gordon to join the fight against certifying President Biden's victory in 2020, lost her bid for secretary of state, the state's top elections official. Voters sided with Robert Short, a county official who has praised local election officials.

State Representative John Bear, a former Freedom Caucus chairman, was defeated by Doug Moore, a coal industry manager and political newcomer who pledged to focus on deregulation. Mr. Moore was backed by Americans for Prosperity, a veteran conservative group. Americans for Prosperity opposed numerous Freedom Caucus legislative candidates, but its spending was dwarfed by Make Liberty Win, a pro-Freedom Caucus political action committee.

Make Liberty Win and other groups prioritized defeating Mr. Barlow in the governor's race. But he won handily after promising to lower the temperature of Wyoming's politics and work on bread-and-butter issues such as energy, rural health care and water.

In one memorable video referring to the negative mailers inundating voters, Mr. Barlow — who is also a veterinarian — pulled on a long plastic veterinarian's glove, reached into his mailbox and retrieved a pile of yak dung.

A missing $1,000 pen becomes a Senate race focus

WASHINGTON

Opponents of Ken Paxton use 2012 incident in jokes and attacks on his honesty

BY LAUREN MCGAUGHY

DESIREE RIOS FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Ken Paxton, the Republican candidate for a U.S. Senate seat in Texas, took the pen while passing through security at a courthouse.

Outside a Ken Paxton fund-raiser in Washington last month stood a mobile billboard truck highlighting the many legal and ethical scandals the Texas attorney general has faced over the years.

The list included a criminal indictment on securities fraud, impeachment in the Texas Legislature and a stolen pen.

The pen was a pointed reference. The ad, paid for by supporters of Mr. Paxton's Democratic opponent for Senate, James Talarico, harked back to an episode more than a decade ago when Mr. Paxton pocketed another lawyer's $1,000 pen while passing through security at a courthouse outside Dallas.

In Texas politics, the Montblanc story has become an enduring piece of niche Paxton lore. It has also become an inside joke, as earlier this month when pens were reportedly confiscated from attendees at a Paxton rally in Houston.

But the episode remains unfamiliar to many Texas voters and even some potential Paxton donors.

"I don't know anything about it," Barry Kendrick, a pilot who lives in Texas, said as he stood near the billboard truck after leaving the fund-raiser in Washington last month.

That has not been for lack of Mr. Paxton's political opponents trying for years to turn the purloined pen into an effective line of attack.

Security footage of the episode was used against Mr. Paxton, a Republican firebrand, during his run for re-election as attorney general in 2018. This spring, Senator John Cornyn's supporters included the pen in an attack ad as he tried unsuccessfully to fend off Mr. Paxton in the Republican primary.

Last week, it resurfaced in an ad for Mr. Talarico featuring an endorsement from Joe Joplin, the lawyer whose pen Mr. Paxton took all those years ago.

"Vote for James Talarico," the voice-over in the ad states. "He won't steal your pen."

The events in question took place at the security checkpoint of a Collin County courthouse. Mr. Joplin had left his Montblanc pen in a security bin. Mr. Paxton spotted the pen — worth around $1,000 — and took it as he passed through security soon after.

Mr. Joplin returned to retrieve the pen, which was a gift from his wife. The building's security footage, dated Aug. 14, 2012, captured the man who took it: Mr. Paxton, who was a state lawmaker at the time from the area. A sheriff's deputy reached out to ask Mr. Paxton if he had the pen. He said he did, and agreed to return it.

Madison Cercy, Mr. Paxton's campaign spokeswoman, called Mr. Talarico's attempts to resurrect the incident a "childish attack" about an issue that had already been addressed.

"This was nothing more than a mix-up at security," she added.

The line of attack involving the pen was familiar to Justin Nelson, the Democratic nominee for attorney general in 2018, who used the security footage as part of his campaign. He still marveled at the episode.

"It's such a ridiculous set of circumstances, right?" Mr. Nelson said in an interview. "Even if it was some innocent mistake, the reality of it is he took somebody else's $1,000 pen."

Mr. Paxton, then a well-funded incumbent, ignored the attacks during the 2018 campaign. This time may be different, Mr. Nelson said. Mr. Paxton has been trailing in fund-raising and in some polls. The national attention surrounding Mr. Talarico has carried the pen further than it ever traveled. And the pen's owner has offered an endorsement for the first time. (Mr. Joplin declined to be interviewed.)

JT Ennis, Mr. Talarico's spokesman, said the incident revealed something about Mr. Paxton's character: He is "the kind of guy who will steal your pen."

The Talarico campaign has also been selling its own ballpoint pens — for a $6 campaign contribution — that read "Not Ken Paxton's Pen." Mr. Nelson's campaign tried the same thing in 2018, selling pens with the message, "Don't Let Ken Steal This Pen."

Mr. Paxton has long denied any wrongdoing in office. The indictment on securities fraud charges in 2015 resulted in a deal in which he paid restitution but did not admit guilt. The impeachment on corruption charges in 2023 ended in an acquittal.

Mr. Kendrick, the pilot at the Washington fund-raiser, said that after seeing the "stolen pen" billboard, he watched the security footage and could not tell whether Mr. Paxton had mistakenly pocketed the pen or taken it on purpose.

Mr. Kendrick, who advocates for pilots, said he frequently attends meetings with officials of both parties where he has to go through a metal detector. To protect his belongings in the security bin, he carries a plastic bag with him.

Into the bag goes his wallet, his watch and, yes, a Montblanc he said he bought at Costco a decade ago for about $100. That pen goes with him everywhere, he said, including to the Paxton fund-raiser in Washington.

And no, Mr. Kendrick joked, Mr. Paxton did not try to take it.

Business

India's graduates face debt and anxiety

NEW DELHI

Expansion of universities has far outpaced the creation of good jobs

BY ALEX TRAVELLI AND SHOWKAT NANDA

Knowledge Park 3, part of an education hub in northern India, was built on a promise that a college degree could lift young Indians into the middle class.

But for many of the roughly 100,000 students drawn to this cluster of private colleges and universities, two hours from central New Delhi, it delivers something else: debt and disappointment.

Families are draining their savings to attend schools that have proliferated across the area's five Knowledge Parks over the past decade. The flood of graduates the schools are producing vastly outnumbers the availability of well-paying jobs.

Harshit Rai, 18, from the north Indian city of Varanasi, spends his days studying artificial intelligence, machine learning and anything else he thinks might help him land a job. He expects his degree from the Noida Institute of Engineering and Technology to cost $15,000, financed in part with $7,000 in bank loans. He said his goal was to earn 80,000 rupees a month, or about $10,000 a year.

He would settle for half that, he conceded, though at that salary it would take five or six years to earn back the cost of his education. A year after graduation, his loan will begin accruing interest at 10 percent annually.

"I feel some stress," he said. "How can I repay on time?"

That anxiety is increasingly familiar among India's young people. Last month, widespread student-led protests forced a rare capitulation from the government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The public displays of outrage have subsided, but the frustration that fueled them has not.

What began as a protest about rigged exams widened into anger over the obstacles young Indians see blocking their path to a better life. The satirically named Cockroach Janta Party — an allusion to a disparaging remark made in May by India's top judge, who compared India's unemployed youths to "cockroaches" — became one expression of that discontent. Private universities sit squarely within the students' dissatisfaction.

India's working-age population, already the world's largest at nearly one billion, grows by about 12 million people a year. For families with money to spare, education is one of the few apparent routes out of low-paid farming and wage labor. The best option is a place at one of the country's highly competitive public universities. For those who cannot get in, private colleges offer another route.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY SHOWKAT NANDA FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Above, students on the campus of Jamia Millia Islamia, a public university in Delhi, India. Harshit Rai, right, a student at the Noida Institute of Engineering and Technology, has borrowed to fund his studies. "I feel some stress," he said. "How can I repay on time?"

That industry has exploded. The number of private colleges tripled in the decade after Mr. Modi became prime minister in 2014. By 2024, India had 45 million students in higher education, up 41 percent from a decade earlier, according to a government survey. More than two-thirds of all students attend private institutions.

But the expansion of higher education has far outpaced the creation of good jobs. Nearly 40 percent of all college graduates under the age of 25 are unemployed, according to a study published by Azim Premji University. India creates only about 250,000 new jobs a year paying more than $500 a month, a benchmark for a comfortable living among the country's top earners. Graduates of elite public universities have an enormous advantage in competing for them.

"There's a lie that's been sold to the young people, which is that a degree equals a job," said Akshay Saxena, an entrepreneur and a founder of an education fellowship program.

India has roughly 550 public universities, but only about a tenth are considered elite. Fewer than 5 percent of applicants are accepted at the top institutions, where tuition averages less than $250 a year and a degree can propel graduates toward the country's most desirable jobs.

Everyone else faces a much riskier calculation.

Mr. Saxena estimates that 400,000 students a year spend more than $20,000 on private engineering colleges, hoping for a big payoff. Median salaries for graduates are around $3,000 a year.

"The employability of the average graduate is just about 20 percent," he said.

The mismatch has fueled what Mr. Saxena called "a terrible national psychosis": ferocious competition for engineering degrees that once seemed to offer reliable entry into India's technology industry. Companies such as Infosys and Tata Consultancy Services built enormous businesses providing information technology services to multinational companies. Now artificial intelligence is making even those jobs appear less secure.

"Borrowing heavily to pursue degrees in India is unwise," Sridhar Vembu, a co-founder of Zoho, an Indian cloud software company, wrote on social media. "I strongly believe we should not trap young people in debt in the name of education."

In Noida, on the outskirts of New Delhi, a handful of tired and anxious undergraduates took shelter from a monsoon downpour at a cafe near the flagship campus of Amity University.

For many students, Amity is a backup when cheaper options fall through. Atul Anand had been admitted to a top public school in his native state, Bihar. But a car accident derailed his admission two years ago, he said, and he borrowed money to attend Amity instead.

He expects his degree and living expenses to cost roughly $15,000. His state government lent him $4,000 toward the bill, while his family has stretched its savings to the limit.

His father teaches math and Hindi at a village school. At night, Mr. Anand takes freelance graphic-design jobs to help cover his daily expenses.

The education industry in India has exploded, with the number of private colleges tripling in the decade after 2014.

With luck, he said, he might graduate into a technology job paying $10,000 a year. "My dreams are not big," he said. "I want to reduce the burden of the loan and the costs to my family."

Against that backdrop, Mr. Anand joined the final day of last month's protests — not as a protester, he said, but in solidarity with students who saw the gathering as a place to air grievances of every kind. "I did not go for any political reason," he said.

His friend Viswesh M.J. was skeptical of the protesters' stated demands, which focused on overhauling India's testing processes. In his view, the unrest reflected something deeper.

"The anger is a mask for your fear," he said of the protesters. "You're all very afraid of the future."

Mr. Saxena knows what the other side of India's education divide looks like. He attended the Indian Institute of Technology Bombay, one of the country's elite public universities, before joining Boston Consulting Group and helping build start-ups in Silicon Valley. Now, through Avanti Fellows, he helps deserving lower-income students prepare for the exams that can win them places at elite institutions.

The program offers free test preparation and intensive coaching. But there are far more aspiring students than places at those schools and far fewer good jobs than graduates chasing them. That leaves a vast private education industry selling families a chance at upward mobility even as the odds deteriorate.

"No one's really going to get a job," Mr. Saxena said. "People are going to monetize their desperation."

Data centers brought riches. Some worry about the costs.

LOUDOUN, VA.

Virginia's Loudoun County enjoys a tax windfall, but not everyone is celebrating

BY CECILIA KANG

Over the past two years, Virginia's Loudoun County unveiled a sleek $102 million recreation center with multiple pools and hydro massage chairs. It spent $22 million to convert the estate of former President James Monroe into a park. And it opened two new schools, with another under construction.

While many communities are in fiscal crisis, Loudoun is flush. The source of its riches: data centers.

A convergence of early fiber internet access and fast-track zoning has made Loudoun the data center hub of the world. Amazon, Microsoft, Google and others have built or are leasing more than 250 warehouses full of computer servers that are powering artificial intelligence and the internet. At least two dozen more are in the pipeline.

Two decades into its experiment, Loudoun has become a case study for the rest of the United States on how to make data centers pay off. Thanks to the proliferation of the warehouses, the quiet bedroom community 30 minutes outside Washington has transformed into a tech destination with trophy schools and libraries, and freshly tarred roads.

A tax on computer equipment inside the data centers is expected to generate about $1.3 billion in revenue next year, or 40 percent of the county's total tax revenue. That has allowed the county to cut property taxes for residents — who have the highest median income in the country — by about 30 percent over the past decade.

Officials across the United States have sought guidance from the county's economic development staff and toured its Data Center Alley, seeking to emulate Loudoun's success. Members of the county's staff have spoken at conferences and hearings about its road map.

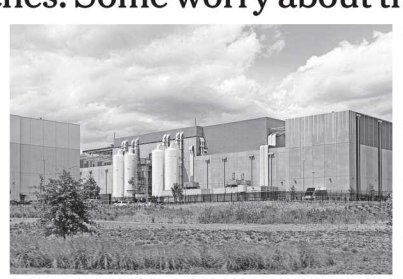
But as A.I.'s rise drives the construction of data centers across the country, residents in Loudoun have started pushing back, mirroring a growing national backlash. Officials and residents say the county has become too dependent on the cash inflow.

"It's gone way too far," said Juli Briskman, a member of the Board of Supervisors in charge of the county's land, zoning and economic policies, who proposed a moratorium on data centers in July. "We've become addicted to the data centers for their tax revenues, but at what cost?"

Other residents and county leaders maintain that data centers have been a gold mine that has made Loudoun one of the best places to live.

"I call this the great overreaction," said Buddy Rizer, executive director for economic development in Loudoun, adding that data centers occupied just 3 percent of the land.

Loudoun's success monetizing data centers runs counter to a nationwide trend in which communities court the computing sites with huge tax incentives, then experience buyer's remorse as the centers guzzle water and electricity. Data centers typically create few jobs, and little revenue for a community.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY CAROLINE GUTMAN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

In Loudoun County, Va., from left: Greg Pirio, who complained of noise and pollution from two data centers near his home; a data center in Ashburn, one of more than 250 in the county; and Buddy Rizer, the county's executive director for economic development, who said the data centers had created about 15,000 jobs and helped keep taxes low.

Last month, New York paused data center development for one year, after an attempt by lawmakers to do so in Maine. In Virginia, state lawmakers recently passed a small tax on data centers based on energy consumption.

Even before the data center boom, Loudoun was an internet hub. In the early 1990s, the federal government installed fiber internet lines, making it a magnet for tech companies. AOL made Ashburn, in Loudoun, its headquarters in 1996.

Four years later, a zoning official made the pivotal decision to categorize data centers as office parks, which require few regulatory approvals for development and construction. That helped fuel a building bonanza.

By 2007, the county had 29 data centers. That same year, the county's Board of Supervisors hired Mr. Rizer to market Loudoun to tech companies as part of a plan to attract more data centers.

At the time, sales tax revenue on computer equipment in data centers was nominal. Mr. Rizer's successful bid to attract more tech companies fueled a spike in income that reached $1.1 billion last year, up from $150 million a decade earlier.

The windfall allowed the Board of Supervisors to reduce residential property taxes every year for the past decade to some of the lowest in the country. The board used the funds to increase budgets for schools, expand fire and emergency services, and improve roads, bridges and tolls.

"People understood that the data centers were the reason we were building schools and keeping taxes low and those kinds of things," Mr. Rizer said, adding that the centers have generated about 15,000 jobs. "From the day we started with data centers to today, more than half of the people are new, so they don't remember when we were struggling financially."

"We struck the right balance, and we are a model."

He said he got frequent calls from economic development offices around the nation, wanting to replicate Loudoun's success.

"We struck the right balance, and we are a model," he said.

With a larger budget — $5.4 billion this year — and strong credit that has allowed the county to float big bond projects, Loudoun expanded recreational services. Last year, it opened a 117,000-square-foot (11,000-square-meter) exercise and community gathering space.

On a recent Monday morning, the Ashburn Recreation and Community Center bustled with older people at one end of the competition-size pool waving their arms in a water aerobics class and children playing in a separate splash pool with slides and sprinklers.

"Loudoun is special," said Sana Akbar, 39, a resident for nearly three decades and a frequent user of the recreation center. Her son's school recently installed a new playground.

"Yes, there are many data centers — and some people say too many — but they've brought many benefits," she added.

The public projects create jobs, said David Costello, head of Costello Construction in Columbia, Md. He said of the 250 employees on the Ashburn recreation center project, 40 percent were Loudoun residents.

"They keep building — it's a perpetual thing," Mr. Costello said.

But with 53 million square feet of data centers, the equivalent of 920 football fields of space, land and patience for more of the warehouses are running out.

When Greg Pirio, 75, bought his home in Sterling in Loudoun County 14 years ago, he said, his neighborhood was full of trees and birds. But in 2023, the data center company Vantage began construction nearby, transforming the neighborhood.

Now, two gray-and-blue data centers create noise and pollution about 200 yards, or 180 meters, from his home. He and other neighbors have complained about the diesel generators and gas turbines used to power the facility.

"What is the quality of life for those who don't even want to go outside because of the noise?" he said.

A Vantage spokesman said it had built the power plants because the local utility, Dominion Energy, would not give access to the grid, which was promised before construction began. Dominion disputed that claim. Vantage said it had put up more paneling and noise-dampening technology to reduce noise from the turbines.

Some residents and environmental groups have demanded policy changes that would make it harder for data centers to open. And the county has made some major changes in response.

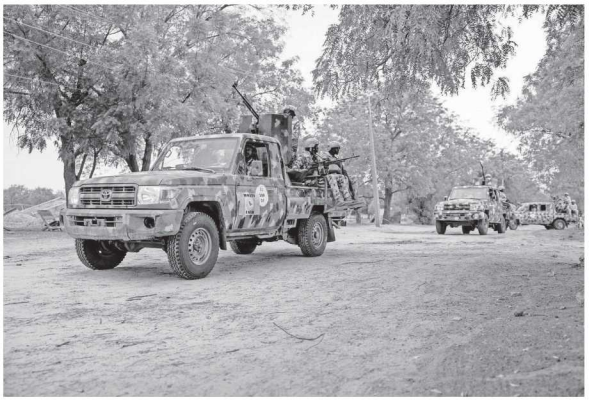
Last year, the Board of Supervisors voted to drastically slow data center construction by ending the zoning policy that considered them office buildings. The decision will not end development, but it will require data center projects for the first time in decades to seek approvals from the public and the board.

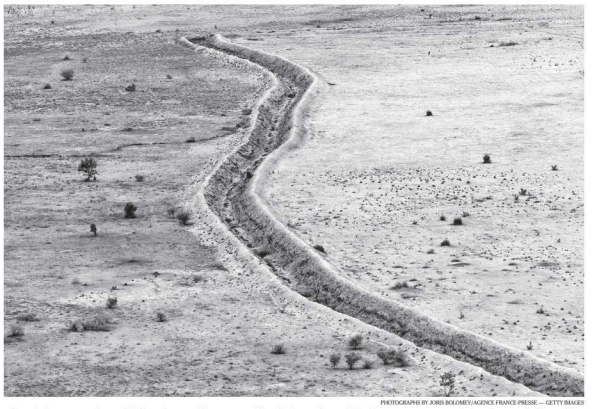
Last month, Amazon applied to build four data centers, which some board members said they would reject.

Hossein Fateh, the founder of CloudHQ, a data center maker and operator that has 15 data centers completed or under construction in Loudoun, is frustrated that the county has been caught in a national political debate.

"If you want to access Netflix, go on Instagram, make sure your email is working, or your Uber Eats or Google Maps operates, you can because of data centers," he said.

BUSINESS





PHOTOGRAPHS BY JORIS BOLOMEY/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE — GETTY IMAGES

Soldiers at Nigeria's Monguno military base, above left. A former Boko Haram member told a researcher how the group used A.I. to figure out how their motorcycles could clear the trenching surrounding the base, above right. "It gave us steps on what we have to do," he said.

To gain a tactical edge, terrorist groups prompt A.I.

A.I., FROM PAGE 1

Large-language models, Dr. Juelich writes in her report, have been "consulted at every stage of military activity — in mission preparation, during operations and in post-mission analysis — representing a different picture from the propaganda-focused A.I. use that dominates the public discourse and existing public research."

The research, and other recent studies that have arrived at similar conclusions, comes as fears rise about the abilities of advanced A.I. models, which the director of the C.I.A., John Ratcliffe, recently likened to "digital nuclear weapons." But the models present underacknowledged risks for other threats such as the creation of biological weapons and terrorism activities, A.I. safety researchers and national security officials said.

The Trump administration has pushed leading labs to let the government vet the newest, most powerful platforms before they are released to the public. Government officials largely center their concerns on the potential for those models to find and exploit software flaws in a way that some fear could wreak havoc on global cybersecurity, not on the potential for terrorism use.

"The terrorists are not waiting for us to make A.I. safe," Dr. Juelich said in an interview, adding that their use of A.I. had been "significantly underestimated in both scope and character."

Daniel Byman, a terrorism expert at Georgetown University in Washington and co-author of a report about A.I. and the future of terrorism released last month by the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said terrorist groups were "mixing and matching" from different A.I. systems, seeking to avoid technical guardrails established by the A.I. companies. Dr. Juelich's research also found that Boko Haram was platform agnostic, interchangeably working with OpenAI's ChatGPT, Anthropic's Claude, Google's Gemini and xAI's Grok, as well as models from the Chinese company DeepSeek.

The methods described to Dr. Juelich generally run through the end of 2024. A.I. companies have released several iterations of their chatbot models since then and generally said that while they had grown more powerful, they also came with stronger safety measures. They have also noted that some malicious functions of A.I. are "dual use," meaning that the information shared can go toward legitimate purposes as well. Learning to jump a motorcycle, for example, is not inherently harmful or violent.

Other cases described by erstwhile Boko Haram members appeared more explicitly intended for violence.

"You type in the question or use your voice and it gives you a detailed answer, like 'How can I build a bomb?,' and then it tells you how," one former commander in Islamic State West Africa Province, a main faction of Boko Haram, told Dr. Juelich last year of using an A.I. chatbot. "It is like a human robot! We used it a lot."

Asked about the Boko Haram study, Michael Aciman, an Anthropic spokesman, said the company's products were "built to refuse dangerous requests, including those tied to violence, attack planning and building explosives." He added that Anthropic worked with outside experts, researchers and industry partners because "no single company can counter these threats alone."

Karl Ryan, a Google spokesman, pushed back against the research, saying that the company's technical experts had reviewed the work and "found the responses were neither specific nor detailed enough to result in misuse." He added that Google had "strict policies prohibiting the use of Gemini to cause real-world harm." Both Anthropic and Google were briefed on the findings by Dr. Juelich before their publication.

Like much of the corporate world, the terrorist groups appear to have teams dedicated solely to working on A.I.

Drew Pusateri, a spokesman for OpenAI, said using the company's platforms for violence or terrorism violated its policies. "We know that bad actors will never stop trying to misuse our tools, and we'll continue strengthening our defenses in response," he said.

Meta said Dr. Juelich's research relied on older models rather than its latest release, and that it continued to strengthen safeguards.

Neither xAI nor DeepSeek responded to requests for comment. Pentagon counterterrorism officials declined to comment on the threat posed by A.I.-enabled plots.

Not everyone agrees that safeguards are improving. The nonprofit Future of Life Institute graded the major A.I. firms on their safety commitments last month and concluded that they had mostly eroded across the industry since last year. While most earned middling marks, xAI and DeepSeek received failing grades.

Other recent studies align with the Boko Haram field research. "A.I. systems can support an array of operational planning functions, including reconnaissance, translation, target research, I.E.D. design, itinerary planning, document drafting, coding, communications security and open-source intelligence analysis," the report from the Center for Strategic and International Studies said, referring in part to improvised explosive devices.

Tech Against Terrorism, an international counterterrorism nonprofit organization supported by the United Nations, last month released results from A.I. tests gauging how more than two dozen leading models responded to thousands of prompts drawn from real-world terrorism cases. The tests were met with "full refusals" just 57 percent of the time. While prompts about explosives were declined about 80 percent of the time, those about improvised chemical weapons were refused only about a third of the time, the group said.

American intelligence analysts say terrorist groups are also beginning to use A.I. to help 3-D-print weapons parts used in plots, according to a former top U.S. official briefed on the matter. For example, A.I. is helping some of those insurgents with design and manufacturing guidance for drone components, repair parts and munitions fittings, said the former official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss internal assessments.

Artificial intelligence is unlikely to transform terrorism overnight, analysts and U.S. officials say. Terrorist organizations typically adopt technology cautiously, selectively and pragmatically.

But the testimonials that Dr. Juelich collected depict both eagerness and dedication among Boko Haram cells. Defectors recounted attending organized training sessions focused on how to best leverage the powers of generative A.I. models to inform or enhance their uses of the technology.

The trainings, in which laptops were equipped with virtual private networks and encryption software, were delivered via transnational jihadist networks often led by members of the Islamic State, interviewees said. Common topics included managing an account on an A.I. platform, suggestions on generating useful answers and tips on evading safety restrictions.

The examples reveal terrorist networks leaning on A.I. in ways not too dissimilar from how typical office employees have incorporated the platforms into their day-to-day work — such as decoding technical information into easy-to-follow steps and surfacing online information that might otherwise be difficult to locate — albeit with markedly different tasks in mind. Like much of corporate America, the terrorist groups appear to have teams dedicated solely to working on A.I.

Some counterterrorism analysts said that so far, A.I. had played a larger role in inspired attack plotting by individuals than in bigger attacks organized by established groups.

Aaron Zelin, a senior fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, said his recent research indicated that some suspected ISIS supporters in the United States and Western Europe had asked ChatGPT questions about potential targets and means for carrying out attacks — a virtual instructional manual. None of the inquiries have led to successful plots, he said.

The Center for Strategic and International Studies report also found that A.I. was likely to strengthen terrorist financing primarily by enhancing the groups' ability to use fraud and deception to raise money to sustain insurgent networks, support individual members, buy equipment and maintain communications.

U.S. officials and researchers cautioned that important operational limits remain, and that A.I. would not readily replace the trust, coordination, financing and real-world experience that seasoned terrorist operatives rely on.

"The likely result is therefore not a dramatic increase in highly sophisticated attacks but rather a modest increase in the competence of lower-level actors," the center's study concluded.

Still, some analysts warned about the technology's reach.

Islamic State Khorasan, or ISIS-K, perhaps the group's most virulent affiliate, has been a leader in jihadist circles in urging its followers to use A.I. to help avoid detection by the authorities, said Tricia Bacon, a Somalia specialist at American University in Washington and a former counterterrorism analyst for the U.S. State Department.

"A.I. has the potential — and in a few cases has demonstrated the ability — to accelerate the process of radicalization and mobilization to violence," Ms. Bacon said.

Tech champions list in Shanghai

SEOUL

Big-name start-ups bypass Wall St. as China seeks to reduce reliance on U.S.

BY STEVE LOHR AND XINYUN WU

Two explosive stock market debuts in Shanghai in recent weeks have underscored a pair of China's intertwined ambitions: harnessing investor enthusiasm for homegrown companies riding the artificial intelligence boom and reducing dependence on American technology and finance.

The companies — CXMT, China's leading memory chip maker, and Unitree Robotics, a Chinese maker of humanoid robots — both chose Shanghai to list their shares. Their offerings were encouraged by government policies aimed at steering promising tech companies toward domestic financial markets rather than relying on state subsidies or foreign capital.

They were departures from years past, when the path for successful Chinese tech start-ups so often ran through Silicon Valley and Wall Street.

"The flow of global tech capital was essentially a one-way street looking westward," the Chinese Communist Party-controlled Global Times said in an editorial last week, citing the CXMT and Unitree initial public offerings in Shanghai as signals of a change. "Today, however, the world is shifting its gaze from West to East."

Under Xi Jinping, China's top leader, Beijing has pursued self-reliance across industries, including critical materials, food and many others, seeking to reduce the leverage that countries can wield over it. Nowhere is that national strategy more evident than in technology, where developing A.I. and advanced semiconductors requires staggering amounts of capital.

Increasingly, the government wants that capital to come from China. The extraordinary reception for CXMT and Unitree suggests that Chinese investors are willing to provide it.

QILAI SHEN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

A Unitree Robotics booth at a tech exhibition in Shanghai, where the company listed its shares in a blockbuster debut. Unitree has become a symbol of China's tech ambitions.

First came CXMT, short for ChangXin Memory Technologies. Late last month, its shares soared 470 percent on the first day of trading, and they have climbed further since, giving the chipmaker a market value of around $545 billion and pushing it past Tencent as China's most valuable publicly traded company.

CXMT has benefited from A.I. technology's insatiable demand for high-speed memory chips, which are essential for storing and moving vast quantities of data. Its main domestic rival, Yangtze Memory Technologies Company, is also preparing to go public.

Then came Unitree. Its shares began trading on Wednesday in Shanghai and surged 460 percent on its debut.

Unitree occupies a more speculative frontier of the A.I. boom. There are still doubts about how quickly a large commercial market will develop for machines that look and move like humans. But videos showcasing the feats of Unitree's humanoid robots, like scaling walls and running races, have attracted millions of views online. In China, the company has become a symbol of the country's high-tech ambitions.

China experts say the growing emphasis on local capital markets is an evolution in the country's industrial policy. Beijing is seeking to rely less heavily on state subsidies, which have often proved costly and inefficient, instead leaning more on investors to decide which companies deserve capital.

Subsidies can work well in established industries, where the product is understood and the technological path relatively clear. For cutting-edge technologies, they can be less effective.

"They work badly at the frontier, where nobody knows which approach wins and they tend to prop up firms that should fail," said Gerard DiPippo, a director at the Eurasia Group, a research group in Washington.

Domestic capital markets and investors, Mr. DiPippo said, will increasingly be relied on as "a better way to discipline growing tech firms."

The government's role is becoming more like a referee and champion of Chinese capital markets. But it still gets involved directly on occasion, acting like a venture capitalist.

Last year, Beijing set up a "national venture capital guidance fund" to work with Chinese investors and eventually deploy as much as $145 billion in investment in companies pursuing high-tech fields like A.I. and quantum computing.

The Shanghai stock market has long been known for volatility and for a listing process burdened by red tape. In June, the Shanghai Exchange issued guidelines to streamline the process for Chinese A.I. software companies.

The Chinese start-ups developing these so-called large language models, the exchange said, "urgently need the supporting role of the capital market."

The first Chinese A.I. model makers to go public early this year — Z.ai and MiniMax — listed first on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange. But the government is encouraging all Chinese A.I. model developers to establish secondary listings in Shanghai, which Z.ai and MiniMax have said they plan to do.

Beijing is not only steering companies toward domestic markets. It is also willing to step in to support those markets when they come under pressure.

In July, as fears of excessive A.I. spending triggered a global stock selloff, the Shanghai market fell. Two state-owned investment funds, China Reform Holdings and China Chengtong Holdings, responded by announcing purchases of $9 billion in Chinese shares.

That increasingly state-guided system contrasts sharply with an earlier era, when American investment funds and venture firms rushed into China, lured by its growth and encouraged by policymakers in Washington. In the 2010s, American investors were early backers of Alibaba, the e-commerce giant; ByteDance, TikTok's parent company; and Didi, a ride-hailing company.

Now, as Beijing encourages domestic investors to put money into homegrown technology companies, it is making foreign capital less welcome.

Geopolitics has contributed to the retreat. American firms have grown wary of being caught in the crossfire of U.S.-Chinese trade and technology disputes. Foreign venture investment in China has fallen sharply.

Many firms have scaled back or left China altogether.

Steve Lohr reported from Seoul and Xinyun Wu from Taipei, Taiwan. Meaghan Tobin contributed reporting from New York.

Founder of Evergrande sentenced to life in prison

Chinese property company amassed billions in debt before it collapsed in 2021

BY YAN ZHUANG AND ALEXANDRA STEVENSON

A court in China on Thursday sentenced the billionaire founder of Evergrande to life in prison, years after the real estate giant's collapse brought China's financial system to the brink.

Hui Ka Yan, the company's founder and former chairman, pleaded guilty in April to several charges, including fund-raising fraud, misuse of funds and securities fraud.

The Shenzhen Intermediate People's Court found that between 2016 and 2021, Mr. Hui and Evergrande engaged in large-scale financial fraud and committed crimes including misuse of funds, fund-raising fraud and illegally taking public deposits, according to an announcement the court posted on social media.

The court ordered Mr. Hui's assets seized and fined Evergrande Group and its subsidiary, Evergrande Real Estate Group, a combined $2.35 billion. His appearance in court, dressed in a navy blue shirt with a flash of white hair, was the first time Mr. Hui had been seen since he disappeared from public view in 2023.

Evergrande was once China's fastest-growing property developer, but its collapse in 2021 under more than $300 billion of debt pushed China's financial system to the edge and exposed the vulnerabilities of the country's economy — especially its dependency on real estate as a driver of growth.

No other company played as big a role in China's staggering real estate boom, and its crash marked the beginning of a prolonged crisis that is still being felt across the economy.

The court found that Mr. Hui bore responsibility for Evergrande Group's operations and should be punished severely because his actions and those of the company "seriously disrupted the socialist market economic order," according to its social media post.

"The amount involved in the crime is exceptionally large, the circumstances are particularly heinous, exceptionally heavy economic losses have been caused, and the harm to society is extremely grave," the court said.

Mr. Hui founded Evergrande in 1996 in the southern city of Guangzhou, just as China was beginning to urbanize and move people from the countryside into the cities. The company's success turned Mr. Hui into one of the world's richest people and he expanded his empire to include a soccer team and an electric vehicle company.

But by 2020, Beijing was growing worried that its property boom — the biggest the world has ever seen — was threatening the financial system because property developers like Evergrande had borrowed so heavily from local governments and banks. To cool the market, officials began restricting how much developers could borrow, cutting debt-burdened companies like Evergrande off from the cash they needed to fund their operations.

Evergrande's collapse exposed the vulnerabilities of China's dependency on real estate as a driver of growth.

When Evergrande collapsed in 2021, much of the blame was placed on Beijing. But the company had been borrowing beyond its means for years and had engaged in questionable accounting and poor oversight that led to a series of unusual events, including the disappearance of $2 billion.

The company was forced into liquidation by a Hong Kong court in 2024. The Shenzhen court on Thursday also sentenced 56 other people, including Mr. Hui's two sons, to terms ranging from 22 months to 18 years.

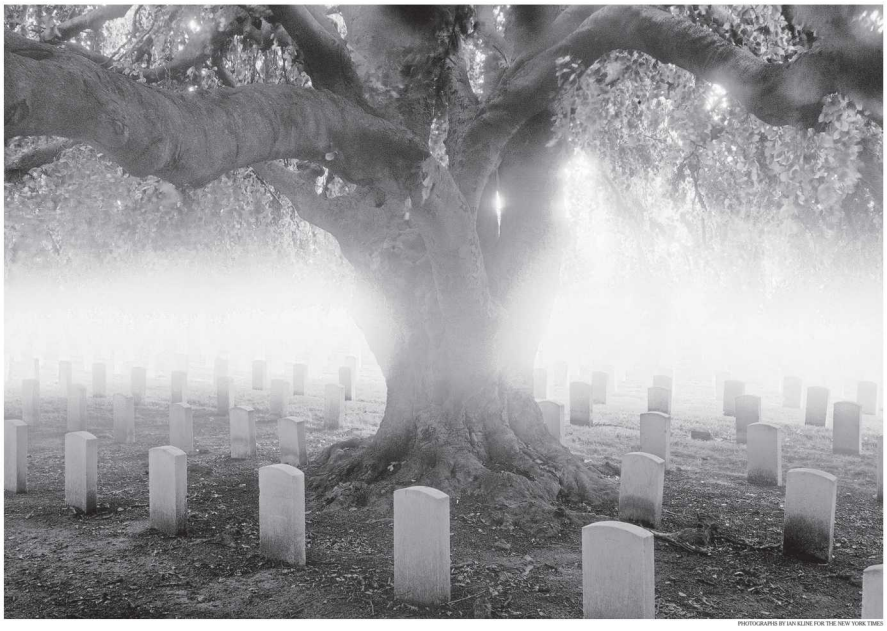
Siyi Zhao contributed research.

Opinion

I spent my summer in the cemetery. There, I found strange solace.

In an increasingly morbid world, we can learn from graveyards.

Will McGrath



PHOTOGRAPHS BY IAN KLINE FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

In June, my family and I hiked out to a pioneer cemetery near Duluth, Minn., along the cascading Saint Louis River. The wall of trees opened onto a clearing that was studded with crumbling tombstones and strange, squat obelisks. "Why are we here again?" my 9-year-old asked. She has auburn hair chopped at the jawline and believes fervently in magic. At her question, my 14- and 16-year-olds sighed and cast their gaze skyward, in a way that conveyed the great depths of their filial respect. They had heard my answer many times already.

Lately I've been haunting the graveyards of the Upper Midwest like the high school goth kid I never was. This is not out of any particular gloominess or moribund tilt to my personality. In fact, despite the daily horrors of America's perma-wars and the expanding gulf between the rich and the poor, I remain — generally, and sometimes unwillingly — an optimist. But over the past year I've taken to strolling the necropolis. I find the practice steadying, a kind of forest bathing. Lakewood Cemetery, near my house in Minneapolis, is deeply calming — a timbered and shady oasis in the city. Take a jaunt through your local cemetery this August and you will feel the jittery rhythms of the modern world recede, the physiological converse of being on your phone.

Some days I wander Lakewood trying to imagine the life of someone like Libbie Storer, whose simple white stone indicates she died at the age of 28 in the year 1873 — an unknowable inner universe, a brief life, long ago concluded. Some days I take a camp chair and set up office hours beneath an oak. This May, my only clients were a family of turkeys: one rested in the shade of the Carlsons' canted markers, three paid their respects to the Bahr family, three more to the Langes. Their wattles swung in the breeze, a faint iridescence along their neck feathers. They looked like dinosaurs. The creatures' mouths hung agape in the heat. Are we not all ugly in our grief?

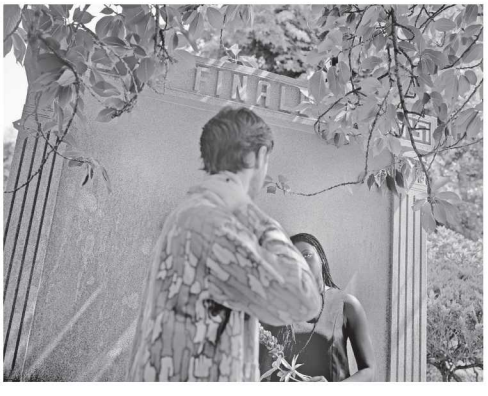
I SUPPOSE I SHOULD NOTE that it's been a rough year and a half in Minnesota.

In June of 2025, the Twin Cities awoke to the news that, overnight, a shooter had assassinated a Minnesota state representative, Melissa Hortman, and her husband in their home, went into his kitchen and returned with a package of SpongeBob SquarePants gummy snacks, which he handed to me wordlessly.

In December, agents from ICE and other federal agencies descended on the Twin Cities.

Perhaps it's not so strange, then, to have spent the last year considering the ways death arrives unannounced.

When summer came, we were looking for a change. I had been working out an idea in my head that seemed within the reasonable bounds of weirdness. As my wife and I plotted our annual family road trip, I made my pitch: *A cemetery tour of the Midwest! It would be fun!* It would be appropriate for our fiscal moment, too, considering the soaring prices of literally all things. Summer becomes increasingly inaccessible each year, pools gated and membership-barred, summer camps requiring mortgages or perhaps loan sharks. But the boneyard is always free.



and seriously wounded State Senator John Hoffman and his wife in their home, leading to a statewide manhunt. The killer was captured two days later hiding in a field.

In August, my quiet South Minneapolis neighborhood was devastated by the Annunciation Catholic School shooting, which left two children dead and 28 people wounded.

The day before that, I had been at the site of a different mass shooting. A man had fired dozens of rounds from a high-powered rifle into a crowd on a street corner, killing one and wounding six. I work as a mental health crisis responder for the city of Minneapolis, and my partner and I were called to the scene to provide emotional support for some children who witnessed the event. An officer led us past a pool of blood up to a second-floor apartment where a mother and two small children were waiting.

The family had heard the shooting just below them and took cover. Through a Spanish-speaking interpreter, the girl, who was maybe 6, told us about the screaming. The boy, who was maybe 4, eyed us silently and said nothing. After a few minutes, he

My wife took in the proposal, cast her gaze skyward in a way that conveyed the great depths of her marital piety, and said, "Sure."

"It's cemetery summer," I whispered and pumped my fist.

A FEW DAYS AFTER my wife agreed to the plan, I found an even more willing audience for my cockamamie scheme. I was working a shift with the mental health crisis response team, which I do part-time. My partner that day was Colter Flanagan. Colter is outsized in many ways: a burly 6'3" Montanan with bright mischievous eyes, wavy black hair, and a dark beard with a mustache that curls up rakishly at the corners of his mouth. He looks a bit like Captain Hook, if the Captain was a fun hang.

In addition to working as a behavioral crisis responder, Colter was completing his doctorate in counseling psychology, and he was enthusiastic when I told him about my vision of a cemetery-centric family road trip. As we cruised around the city responding to calls, Colter told me about his academic research, which involved death and dying and mental well-being. Recently, he'd been interviewing death doulas and people near their end of life. The more people he spoke to, the more he felt we spend too little time contemplating our mortality.

It does seem that we've never been more culturally terrified to acknowledge death and aging, our own ephemerality. Cosmetic augmentation is on an unprecedented rise for young people. We are forever being reassured that 40 is the new 20, or 70 is the new 40 (which by my sixth-grade math also makes 70 the new 20 — confusing!). We live in a time when tech moguls attempt to outrun death, biohacking themselves via infusions of their children's blood plasma, like something out of a hamfisted fairy tale. My wife teaches an undergraduate medical anthropology class and each year asks her students what they know about their parents' and grandparents' wishes regarding end-of-life decisions. Each year, most of the students say they've never discussed it.

Colter acknowledged how uncomfortable it can be to grapple with what he called the "existential dread" of dying. But he had come to the opinion that it was a privilege to be able to confront your death honestly. Many people never get that chance, living lives partially asleep, distracted into oblivion, dying suddenly, robbed of consciousness by illness or accident.

The topic was personal for Colter. When he was 19, one of his best friends died in a skiing accident. "That experience shook me to my core," he said. At that time, Colter had been struggling with addiction, stuck in a destructive version of his life. He got clean and reoriented his priorities.

One hot summer day, when we were working together, I noticed he had the words "memento mori" tattooed across his thigh. It was shorts season. "I always want to remember that," Colter said. "You too will die someday. Meditate on the fact." For him, this act of daily contemplation was not morbid, but rousing. "It's to inspire you, inflame you. To ask the questions of yourself: Is this the person I want to be? Are these the actions I want to be taking?"

SO WE EMBARKED on a summer road trip, my wife, our three children and I, off to confront our personal demises. (Here I can sense America's grandpas setting their newspaper beside the armchair, looking overtop their collective reading glasses, and asking if we visited Gettysburg. Sirs, we did not.) We rambled through Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Iowa and Illinois. On Madeline Island, in Wisconsin, we visited the La Pointe Indian Cemetery, shoved up against thundering Lake Superior. The grounds there are populated with tilted stelae and Ojibwe spirit houses, low wooden structures covering burial spots. The cemetery is cordoned off by a metal fence adorned with beads and bangles, strips of cloth and bark, plastic fidgets and sun-dried stuffed animals. We stood at the boundary and did not cross.

On Mackinac Island, Mich., in Lake Huron, we saw the graves of people who had been dead for 200 years. As we wandered in that sylvan cemetery, my 9-year-old predicted she would die by "wrecking ball," which is not a phrase I encountered on other tombstones along the way.

Over the past year I've taken to strolling the necropolis. I find the practice steadying, a kind of forest bathing.

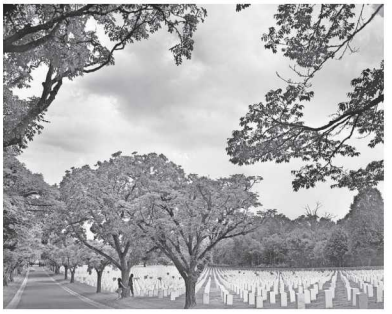
During our sojourn, we saw grave markers etched with angels, with horses, with big rig semis, with Santa Claus, with the logo of the Detroit Lions. People died in infancy and in the War of 1812. On the northern shore of Lake Michigan, we visited the Gros Cap Cemetery, which claims to be the oldest continually used cemetery in the United States of America. The land had been a burial ground for Anishinaabe people as far back as the 1600s, and for Michiganders as recently as the 2020s.

We talked about what might be a good way to die, or what that could even mean, and what we wanted done with our bodies after we were dead. Eventually the kids accepted that I was not going to stop talking about cemetery summer and engaged, in their own roundabout ways. Our 16-year-old, who loves cooking, settled on his final state: cremated and then sifted into the dough for his hand-pulled linguine recipe. "You know how there's squid ink spaghetti?" he said. "Like that."

By the end of the trip, I had begun to notice little cemeteries everywhere, humble lots beside rural highways, scenic benches dedicated to people long past, impromptu memorials at the bases of telephone poles. Everywhere there were lives that had been lived and commemorated. I understood this as a way of encountering the world: to remain attuned to the ghosts native to that place.

BACK AT THE BEGINNING of our cemetery summer, my family and I had spent some time among the pioneer graves near Duluth. Then we hiked on, down a fern-bound trail and across a shag carpet of pine needles that were burnt orange and toasting in the sun. I was thinking about a passage from the novel "Orbital," by Samantha Harvey, which won the Booker Prize in 2024. The novel tells the story of six astronauts aboard a space station. Harvey describes an astronaut drifting between sleep and waking, observing Earth beyond the thin shell of the space station: "Our lives here are inexpressibly trivial and momentous at once," he thinks. "We matter greatly and not at all . . . Some metal separates us from the void; death is so close. Life is everywhere, everywhere."

My kids were stomping down the trail, trying to top one another in a contest of outrageously dumb puns, cracking themselves up. It was the same kind of nonsense I could remember doing with my own siblings. The five of us schlepped onward into the glorious day, and life went on, for a little while.



WILL MCGRATH *is the author of the books "Farewell Transmission: Notes From Hidden Spaces" and "Everything Lost Is Found Again."*

OPINION

The New York Times
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Gas prices aren't falling for a very simple reason

Skip York

When President Trump announces yet another potential peace agreement with Iran, crude oil prices fall, and the world makes the mistake of thinking that gas and diesel prices will follow. But crude oil isn't the right barometer of your pain at the pump. By the end of July, crude oil prices had fallen about 25 percent from their April peak, while gasoline prices dropped only about 9 percent after peaking at around $4.50 a gallon in May.

With prospects for peace fading again, both gas and diesel resumed their upward path, with gas at $4.07, while diesel reached $5.47 nationally.

Focusing on the price of crude is misleading, a bit like following the price of wheat when it's bread that you're actually buying. The gauge to watch is what's called the crack spread — the difference between the cost of a barrel of crude and the prices of the refined products made from it. If you want to drill down, it's often referred to as the 3-2-1 spread, which calculates prices when three barrels of crude are refined into two barrels of gasoline and one barrel of diesel, a typical ratio.

The "crack spread" is going to make your life very unpleasant.

(Cracking is the process of breaking large hydrocarbon molecules into smaller ones, which is what a refinery does.)

When crude oil prices fall faster than gas and diesel prices, the crack spread widens. This disconnect is known as the "rocket and feather" effect, in which retail gasoline prices escalate quickly as crude oil prices rise, but drift down slowly when prices start to fall. When wholesale prices of gasoline spike, service station owners raise prices quickly because they know their future gas deliveries will be more expensive. They might also notice that competitors are raising prices and act accordingly, as nobody wants to sell today's fuel at yesterday's price and forgo the profits.

Conversely, when station owners see wholesale costs start to fall, they're not necessarily in a rush to cut prices and sacrifice profit margins — at least until customers start to notice. The result is a retail market that tends to overreact to bad news and only grudgingly responds to good news.

More recently, there's been an added supply twist tied to Russia. Ukraine's drone bombing campaign has disabled swaths of Russia's refining capacity, which could decrease the country's supply by up to 28 percent from last year.

In the Middle East, the Iran-U.S. conflict not only interrupted shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, but also damaged a number of refineries in the Persian Gulf. Similar to the situation in Russia, refining capacity remains well below prewar levels even as crude production in the region begins to recover. War in Ukraine and the Middle East could end immediately, but damaged refining capacity will take a long time to restore — and there aren't a lot of new refineries under construction in the rest of the world.

In fact, even if crude production rises, it doesn't help much when some 9 percent of global refining capacity is offline. Refining capacity is now the bottleneck that is squeezing fuel prices higher worldwide, diesel in particular. Russian and Middle Eastern refineries yield more diesel per barrel than U.S. refineries, which lean toward gasoline, so losing that output hits diesel supplies harder. That's why diesel prices have fallen less than gasoline since their April peaks.

Another big player that is making waves is China, which is both the world's largest crude importer and its largest refiner. At the start of the Iran-U.S. conflict, China began cutting crude oil imports, which are now at an eight-year low, drawing on domestic stockpiles to avoid rising prices while freeing up barrels for other refiners. That eased pressure on crude oil prices.

China wasn't necessarily playing the good guy. While it was limiting imports, China also restricted exports of gasoline, diesel and jet fuel. That pulled Chinese barrels out of a global market that badly needed them, tightening supply everywhere else and pushing fuel products' prices up. This isn't a temporary market reaction; it is a structural change.

And you're paying for it. Through July, in our peak driving season, data from the Energy Information Agency indicates that wholesale gasoline and diesel prices are up about 59 percent and 69 percent, respectively, over a year ago. That's way more than the 36 percent increase in crude oil prices.

The impact goes well beyond your commute and into the broader economy. Diesel is the workhorse of the real economy. Diesel moves goods by truck and rail; it makes harvesting crops possible, and is critical in the construction of homes, buildings and factories. That's why the U.S. Postal Service has temporarily raised rates for package delivery. Jet fuel prices are expected to be up by about 70 percent this year, increasing airlines' operating costs, sending fares higher. All of this makes the Fed's job of moderating inflation more difficult.

The world isn't running out of oil. It is running out of places to turn that oil into fuel. Which means the price of refined products such as gasoline will remain high. And that could be a far more vexing problem to fix.

SKIP YORK *is a fellow in energy and global oil at the Center for Energy Studies at Rice University's Baker Institute.*

ALEKSEY KONDRATYEV FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

The Democrats haven't quite hit Tea Party territory — yet

Kristen Soltis Anderson

JONNO RATTMAN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Former U.S. Senator Jim DeMint, a prominent Tea Party figure, often said he'd rather serve in a small but ideologically conservative Senate minority caucus than a majority Republican coalition made up of moderates. Better, he would say, to have 30 Marco Rubios in the Senate than 60 Arlen Specters.

When the Tea Party emerged in 2009, it shocked the Republican establishment and transformed the next decade of politics. It shifted the G.O.P. ideologically, prioritized a combative temperament and looked askance at traditional notions of electability.

Sound familiar?

Today, as heated Democratic primaries have pitted more moderate, establishment candidates against progressive insurgents, it can feel a bit as though Democrats are experiencing their own Tea Party moment. From Zohran Mamdani's meteoric rise in New York City to the victory of Abdul El-Sayed in Michigan's Senate primary this month, normie Democrats are looking over their shoulder at the far-left Democrats and democratic socialists coming for them. Establishment Republicans of the Tea Party era will remember that feeling well.

The party isn't shifting left as much as you may think.

But there are two key differences between what happened to the Republican Party in the 2010s and the revolution happening in the Democratic Party today that have at least temporarily delayed the Democrats' own Tea Party moment: the nature of the party's recent defeats and the longstanding makeup of the party's voter base.

On the issues, Tea Party voters were well to the right of non-Tea Party Republicans, and Tea Party voters' higher turnout rates in primaries coincided with a moment when the number of swing seats in Congress declined, in many instances making primaries, not general elections, the more important contests. In these races, being perceived as the "true" conservative who refused to compromise was seen as essential. Groups like the Republican Study Committee and House Freedom Caucus created frequent headaches for congressional leaders who sought to cut deals and govern. During Barack Obama's presidency, government shutdowns never gutted Obamacare or brought about what the movement saw as fiscal sanity, but holding the line was seen by many Republicans as preferable to compromising with Democrats.

The Democratic Party of today is beginning to experience some version of this transformation. The strongest signal involves the question of temperament and the desire for a party that puts up more of a fight. In March 2025, shortly after President Trump's second inauguration, 81 percent of Democratic-leaning voters in my polling said they wanted the Democratic Party to be more combative, including 50 percent who wanted the party to be much more combative. Roughly a year later, that figure rose to 62 percent.

At the same time, evidence of a sharp ideological left turn in the party is more mixed, at least for now. My data does show the ideological left is an expanding bloc within the Democratic electorate and that Democratic voters are amenable to democratic socialism, loosely defined, over capitalism. Younger Democrats and more highly educated Democrats have shown an appetite for candidates who get a stamp of approval from Senator Bernie Sanders or Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez — a dynamic on display in the Michigan Senate primary.

But many of the voters holding back this progressive drift are in the older, working-class, more racially diverse precincts that remain decisive in Democratic primaries outside deep blue areas. Candidates like Dr. El-Sayed and the democratic socialist Francesca Hong — who lost in last week's Wisconsin Democratic primary for governor — saw lackluster support in these areas. The same cohort of voters that delivered Joe Biden the Democratic nomination in 2020 is the one keeping the Democratic Party's leftist impulses in check — for now.

While the Republican Tea Party moment saw alignment of the party's activist class with its most reliable voters, the Democratic Party does not yet show such clear overlap. Leftist Democrats and democratic socialists may make way-out — frankly, ridiculous — statements about abolishing prisons or canceling Thanksgiving (of the kind that Ms. Hong tried to walk back), but many Democratic voters aren't on board. In my surveys, only one-quarter of Democratic voters said they wanted their party to move to the left; more than four in 10 wanted it to move to the center. And while there were some clear leftward turns in Democratic voter policy preferences, like rising support for Medicare for all, most Democratic voters said they opposed the more out-there proposals from hard-core progressives like allowing noncitizens to vote.

The biggest difference so far between the G.O.P. Tea Party and whatever is happening in the Democratic Party is that the Democrats haven't yet thrown away a winnable seat as a result of their intraparty convulsions. Several progressive candidates who defeated establishment incumbents in this cycle have done so on safe Democratic terrain. (Keep an eye on the general election in Michigan, where Dr. El-Sayed and the former congressman Mike Rogers have been separated by only a few percentage points.)

For Republicans, the Tea Party era showed no such limitation. Tired of being told which candidates had what it took to win, many Republican activists and voters in those years chose unelectable candidates in otherwise winnable races. In 2010's red wave midterm elections — a rout that Mr. Obama called a "shellacking" — the party left pickup opportunities on the table. The Republican Senate nominees Christine O'Donnell, who eventually declared "I'm not a witch," and Sharron Angle, mostly remembered for her reference to "Second Amendment remedies," wound up losing.

This dynamic percolated during the era of Republican losses in the 2008 and 2012 presidential elections, in which the party's activists were frustrated that the establishment candidates John McCain and Mitt Romney lost to Mr. Obama. As Rush Limbaugh put it in 2015: "Every time they nominate one of these guys, one of the people they really like, they end up losing. And they lose big!"

Democrats certainly wish their party were better at winning. They lament the debacle of Mr. Biden's late exit from the 2024 race. But recall that at the time, it wasn't just the party's establishment wing encouraging Mr. Biden to stick around; Mr. Sanders was among the most vocal defenders of Mr. Biden between the president's disastrous debate and his withdrawal.

Like Republicans in 2010, Democrats are quite likely to do well in 2026, possibly taking control of one or both chambers of Congress. Though much of Democrats' success will be thanks to Mr. Trump's sagging approval ratings, success has a hundred fathers, as they say. Potential 2028 Democratic contenders of all stripes will probably claim it is their brand of politics that is the sure recipe for success.

If the Democratic Party gains control of Congress, its voters will demand a fight. And results. They want to see their party restrain Mr. Trump. If that fails to materialize, Democrats may find themselves where Republicans were a decade ago.

KRISTEN SOLTIS ANDERSON *is the author of "The Selfie Vote: Where Millennials Are Leading America (and How Republicans Can Keep Up)."*

How Brazil is charting its own path

PAGLIARINI, FROM PAGE 1

question of why Brazil had fallen short, and what to do about it, held the key to political success.

From the 1920s onward, two broad visions competed for that key. The progressive version held that Brazil's failure to realize its potential was rooted in inequality and the capture of the state by elites who benefited from foreign exploitation. A broad reformist agenda became the precondition for national development. Under President João Goulart in the early 1960s, this vision took the form of the "reformas de base," a suite of policies including agrarian reform, voting rights for illiterate Brazilians, limits on profit remittances by foreign corporations and greater state control over natural resources. Against the backdrop of the Cold War, the language of national self-determination became a common idiom of Brazilian democratic politics.

A U.S.-backed military coup in 1964 put an end to that. Instead, the generals who seized power fused patriotic propaganda with violent authoritarianism. In making the case for military rule, Roberto Campos, the regime's cerebral planning minister, attacked what he called "temperamental nationalism" — which he dismissed as emotional, erratic and economically ruinous — and insisted that market discipline and alignment with Washington constituted the true national interest. The dictatorship's patriotism, which reached its apogee in 1970 when Brazil won its third soccer World Cup, expected citizens to feel proud of their country without raising uncomfortable questions about who it was serving. Those who did were painted as obstacles to the nation's development, or made to suffer much worse fates.

The dictatorship ended in 1985, but the battle for the nationalist mantle went on. When Jair Bolsonaro promised during his 2018 campaign that "red criminals will be banished from our homeland" and asserted that "we are the real Brazil," set to "build a new nation," he was not borrowing from Mr. Trump's playbook so much as reaching into his own country's political inheritance. Conservatives had made similar proclamations throughout the Cold War when denouncing progressive nationalists as insidious subversives.

Rather than rewriting the terms of Brazilian politics, President Trump has simply given both the left and the right new ammunition for a long-running ideological dispute.

Mr. Bolsonaro updated the content, but the form was the same: Claim the nation, delegitimize the left as anti-Brazilian and insist that what is good for the United States is good for Brazil.

His son has sought to pull off the same trick. Flávio Bolsonaro has made security a central line of attack on Mr. Lula, arguing that the president and his party are soft on organized crime. Turning to Washington, Mr. Bolsonaro helped in May to secure the U.S. designation of Brazil's two largest criminal organizations as terrorist groups. But the approach comes at a political cost. When Mr. Trump applied new tariffs on Brazilian goods last month, Mr. Lula convincingly cast himself as the defender of Brazilian sovereignty against foreign meddling. The same thing happened last year when Mr. Trump launched a trade war against Brazil at the Bolsonaros' behest.

DANIEL RAMALHO/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE — GETTY IMAGES

Flávio Bolsonaro, the son of the disgraced former Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro and a leading contender in the country's presidential election in October.

This is the bind the Brazilian right has always faced when it aligns too visibly with Washington: The left turns the alignment into evidence that the right cannot be trusted with the national interest. It happened in the 1950s, when conservatives were tarred as puppets of Yankee imperialism. It happened under the dictatorship, when the regime's development model was attacked for enriching foreign multinationals at Brazil's expense. And it is happening now, as Mr. Bolsonaro's eagerness to enlist Washington's assistance is criticized as putting another country's interests first.

None of this is to say that Mr. Trump's interventions are meaningless. In a race this close, pressure from Washington could shift the margins, as it has elsewhere in Latin America during Trump 2.0. But the forces driving the election run far deeper than anything on Truth Social. Brazil's economy, while resilient, continues to frustrate expectations, with high interest rates and persistent concerns over public debt. Public security is another source of anxiety; crime is one of voters' central concerns. And the public, though still polarized, is showing signs of weariness. Recent polling shows that 20 percent of voters identify with neither Mr. Lula nor his main challenger.

Mr. Bolsonaro's regular trips to the United States are clearly meant to project influence back home, burnishing the image of a future president who commands respect from the hemispheric superpower. But every MAGA photo opportunity serves as further fodder for Mr. Lula's core argument: that the Bolsonaro camp has traded Brazil's dignity and democracy for American approval. Whoever prevails in October, the old question will remain: Who truly speaks for Brazil — and who has sold it out?

ANDRE PAGLIARINI *is an assistant professor of history and international studies at Louisiana State University, a fellow at the Washington Brazil Office and a nonresident expert at the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft. He is the author of "Lula: A People's President and the Fight for Brazil's Future" and the forthcoming "Claiming the Nation: The Politics of Nationalism in Modern Brazil," from which this essay is adapted.*

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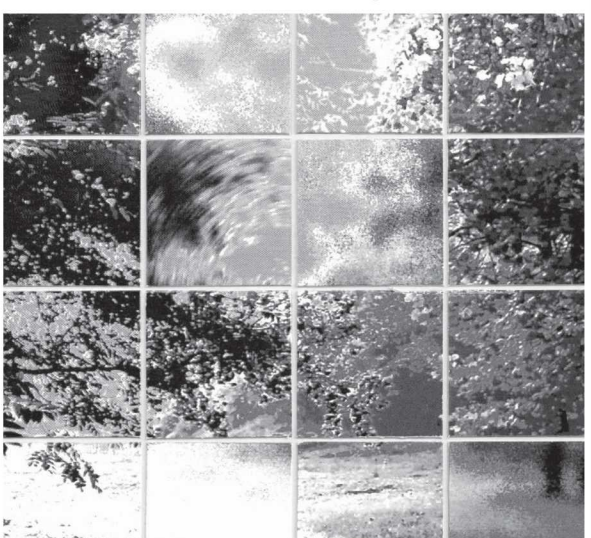
WELL

Dizzy? Don't rule out migraines.

Absence of headaches means vestibular version is trickier to diagnose

BY BRENT CRANE



DHRUTIKA KHIMANI

Ten years ago, after returning from a trip abroad, Alicia Wolf, then 30, woke up feeling dizzy. Alongside her jet lag, she had been recovering from a cold. Work, as a watch designer in Dallas, had become stressful. Her doctor predicted that her dizziness would peter out with the cold. "But it just never went away," she said.

As Ms. Wolf worked her way through eight puzzled E.N.T.s, neurologists and other doctors, her condition worsened. She developed extreme sensitivity to light and sound. Staring at her computer screen at work became unbearable. Some days, she'd park her car and feel as if it were still moving.

An E.R. doctor told her she had vertigo, which is a symptom. "Everyone just said, 'Oh, it's anxiety, it's depression, it's all these different things,'" she recalled. Five months passed before she finally heard a diagnosis of vestibular migraine.

This poorly understood form of migraine is primarily characterized by dizziness, disequilibrium and vertigo — but no headache. Because there's typically no head pain, doctors often mistakenly rule out migraine. A 2018 study found that only a tenth of subjects with vestibular migraine were told that migraine was causing their dizziness.

The study also found that almost 3 percent of Americans suffer from the condition, though this is likely an undercount, said Dr. Jeffrey Sharon, an associate professor of otolaryngology at the University of California, San Francisco, and a co-author of the study.

"I call it the most common disease you've never heard of," he said. "The vestibular system in general is a forgotten corner of medicine."

Experts describe migraine (vestibular or otherwise) chiefly as a sensory processing disorder. During an attack, abnormal brain activity trips the trigeminal nerve, which releases molecules called calcitonin gene-related peptides, or C.G.R.P., that inflame nearby blood vessels and sensitize the nerve itself, putting pain signaling into overdrive. That causes the nervous system to become hypersensitive to stimuli it would normally tolerate, and can produce a wide range of reactions to light, sound and even smells.

Vestibular migraine primarily affects the vestibular system, which is found in the inner ear and works with your brain to help maintain balance and coordinate posture and eye movements. When this balance system becomes hypersensitive, it causes the trademark dizziness and disequilibrium.

Because it involves dizziness, vestibular migraine falls in a gap between two specialties: neurology and otology. It is often mistaken for Ménière's disease, an inner ear disorder, or persistent postural-perceptual dizziness, a chronic neurological condition. Until 2012, vestibular migraine lacked formal diagnostic criteria.

While most neurologists and E.N.T.s are now familiar with the condition, many primary care doctors are not, said Cynthia Ryan, the executive director of the Vestibular Disorders Association, a patient advocacy group. Dr. Sharon said his average patient had visited at least five providers before reaching him.

Experts aren't sure why vestibular symptoms present in some people but not others. But a history of migraine in any form may make someone more likely to experience a vestibular one. According to the 2018 study, being younger than 40, being female, and having anxiety, depression or prior head trauma were all associated with "significantly increased odds" of experiencing vestibular migraine. "Oftentimes people think, 'I used to get migraines in my teens, but I don't get them anymore, so this can't be migraine,'" said Dr. Margaret Aron, a clinical assistant professor of otolaryngology and head and neck surgery at the University of British Columbia who studies dizziness. "But you're kind of always a migrainer. Your brain is always susceptible to that."

While diagnosing the condition can be difficult, there is consensus around the most common drivers: stress, poor sleep and inflammation.

My own bout of vestibular migraine included all three. In December, my wife gave birth to our first child. Sleep became dismal. Work was piling up, and I was suffering from seasonal allergies. At the computer one evening, wrapping up a project, I was overcome with intense vertigo. Turning my head sent the room spinning. The suddenness and immensity of the attack was frightening; I was bedridden for hours. For several days afterward, I felt lethargic and sensitive to light and sound, as if hung over.

> **"Oftentimes people think, 'I used to get migraines in my teens, but I don't get them anymore, so this can't be migraine.'"**

Over the next four months, this happened half a dozen times more. Each attack followed a busy workday or bout of travel and varied in severity. My primary care doctor was stumped. An audiologist detected no hearing loss, which ruled out Ménière's. An M.R.I. found nothing. An optometrist detected no vision changes. But the neurologist knew.

For good measure, I met with my E.N.T., Dr. Philip Littlefield, who practices near my home in San Diego. He agreed with the neurologist's diagnosis. But I had no history of migraine, I said to him. Why now?

He mentioned the trifecta of triggers and my age (35). He also noted how people who get migraines tend to have brains that are sensitive to sensory stimuli. Digesting this, I realized that I'd always been easily bothered by sound, especially loud chewing. My vasovagal response is also annoyingly jumpy; blood draws have made me faint. Dr. Littlefield saw a pattern. "You're right down the middle of the lane with this one," he said.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to treating vestibular migraine. In many cases, doctors prescribe a cocktail of various medications, lifestyle changes and supplements. Protocols are multidisciplinary and individualized, and providers often disagree over what works.

After an E.N.T. suspected that Ms. Wolf had vestibular migraine, she connected with Dr. Shin Beh, a neurologist who runs a private clinic in Irving, Texas, specializing in vestibular and migraine disorders. Dr. Beh said most people come to him after bouncing fruitlessly between specialists, something he likens to "wandering in the wilderness."

Reviewing M.R.I. scans of Ms. Wolf's brain, Dr. Beh identified white matter spots (small patches where the brain's wiring has undergone some minor change) that can indicate migraine activity. Taking her symptoms and lifestyle into account, he confirmed the diagnosis.

Dr. Beh devised a treatment plan for Ms. Wolf that included timolol, a beta blocker eye drop, and lorazepam, to treat her anxiety. She also took various supplements that studies suggest might help prevent migraine, such as magnesium, CoQ10 and vitamin B2. And Dr. Beh advised some major lifestyle changes: Ms. Wolf left her high-stress job and eliminated alcohol and caffeine.

Over time, Ms. Wolf gradually progressed from near-constant dizziness and frequent debilitating vertigo attacks to dizzy-free hours, then days, then months. Now, 10 years later, she says she is in remission. She still takes daily supplements, but only uses the lorazepam and timolol as "rescue" meds.

Specialists and sufferers say that vestibular migraine is starting to get the attention it deserves.

Dr. Sharon recently conducted an unpublished study with Dr. Jason Allen, a neuroradiologist at Indiana University, analyzing brain activity in vestibular migraine patients. They found that the insula, the brain's hub for integrating sensory information with emotional and cognitive processing, was particularly affected.

"Hyperactivity of the insula would seem to explain many of the clinical features that we can see in vestibular migraine," he said.

And research on migraine as a whole has shed light on vestibular migraine causes and treatments, most notably through the study of C.G.R.P. Scientists identified C.G.R.P in the '80s, but it took decades of research to establish it as the key mechanism behind migraine headache. Dr. Jeffrey Staab, a Mayo Clinic psychiatrist who specializes in dizziness disorders, calls it "the first really unique migraine pathology clue."

In 2018, a wave of drugs targeting C.G.R.P. finally came to market — the first therapies designed specifically for migraine headaches. Now there's some indication that C.G.R.P. drugs may help some people with vestibular migraine, too.

In a 2024 study, Dr. Sharon and his colleagues found that a C.G.R.P.-inhibiting drug called galcanezumab (brand name Emgality) outperformed a placebo in reducing dizziness.

Another C.G.R.P. inhibitor, Ubrelvy, has worked wonders for me. But there haven't been any large trials testing the drugs' effectiveness for vestibular migraine, and the experts said some patients see only modest benefits or none at all.

At the same time, triptans, a class of drugs known as selective serotonin receptor agonists, which have strong evidence in treating migraine headaches, have shown little effect on vestibular migraine.

While the ultimate goal is to develop better treatments for vestibular migraine, experts first need a deeper understanding of the disease, Dr. Sharon said.

"A picture is emerging that is more complex," he said, "where vestibular migraine shares many features of migraine, but they are not the same."

Americans are moderating their drinking, studies find

Fewer people are meeting the criteria for a diagnosis of alcohol use disorder

BY TED ALCORN

Americans appear to be moderating — at least when it comes to alcohol.

The number of people who drink in a way that crosses the line into a medical disorder decreased substantially over a five-year period in the United States, according to new federal data.

The National Survey on Drug Use and Health, released last month, found that the share of people 12 and older who qualified for a diagnosis of alcohol use disorder fell to 8.9 percent in 2025 from 10.6 percent in 2021 — or by about 4 million people.

The methodology of that annual survey, conducted by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, was updated during the pandemic, so its results cannot be compared to years before 2021, the agency said.

But Katherine Keyes, a professor of epidemiology at Columbia University in New York, said the decline was credible, in part because a Gallup survey and a long-running University of Michigan study also show fewer Americans are drinking.

"This is the direction we want to see the data going, and the fact that we're seeing it across multiple samples is also a very encouraging sign," she said.

The decline comes even as the federal government has retreated from alcohol as a public health concern, loosening its dietary guidance on drinking and shedding scientists who track alcohol's toll.

Alcohol use disorder is a diagnosis for drinking that a person cannot fully control, even as it undermines their work, health and relationships. "You can define a use disorder as continued use despite consequences," said Alexis Ritvo, an addiction psychiatrist at the University of Colorado School of Medicine, who has treated thousands of such patients.

The diagnosis also reflects advances in the understanding of alcohol dependency, which scientists no longer see as a binary division between those who can control their drinking and those who can't, but as a spectrum.

To assess patients, clinicians usually ask about 11 symptoms, including cravings, drinking more or for longer than intended, and unsuccessful attempts to cut back. Two or three symptoms count as a mild disorder; four or five as moderate; and six or more as severe.

The federal data suggest that the decline has been chiefly among people with a mild form of the disorder, who constitute a majority of problem drinkers and whose numbers fell by nearly a fifth, or almost three million people. There was less of a decrease in the share of people with moderate and severe alcohol use disorder.

Even a decline confined to milder cases is consequential, because those cases are so numerous. "It's a massive public health gain," said John Kelly, the director of the Recovery Research Institute at Mass General Brigham in Boston.

The distinction between milder and more severe forms of the disorder matters for treatment, said Marissa Esser, a public health consultant and a former director of the alcohol program at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. People with severe alcohol disorder may benefit from effective but underused medications like naltrexone, while those with milder cases "can generally reduce their drinking on their own," she said, without specialized addiction treatment.

Asked to explain the decline, Dr. Kelly pointed to converging cultural forces, rather than any single cause. Since the early 2000s, successive generations of young people have been drinking less and are now carrying those habits into adulthood. A growing share of Americans are aware of alcohol's health risks, including its role in causing cancers of the breast, throat and esophagus, the subject of a Surgeon General's advisory in January 2025. Some drinkers may also be turning to cannabis.

"Many people who would previously have met criteria for mild alcohol use disorder may never progress that far because of these changing social norms, greater health awareness and alternative recreational activities," Dr. Kelly said. If current trends continue, he added, declines in moderate and severe disorder might eventually follow.

Studies have shown that semaglutide, the compound in the popular weight-loss drugs Ozempic and Wegovy, can also curb cravings for alcohol, and about 1 in 8 American adults now takes semaglutide or a similar drug, according to a survey by the health research group KFF.

But Christian Hendershot, a professor at the University of Southern California who led the first randomized trial of semaglutide's effects on drinking, said he was hesitant to attribute the decline in alcohol use disorder to the medications. Their effects on alcohol consumption are "most pronounced in the heaviest drinkers," he wrote, yet severe cases are where the numbers have moved least.

> **The decline comes even as the federal government has retreated from alcohol as a public health concern, loosening its guidance.**

For people who recognize that alcohol is affecting their daily life, Dr. Ritvo recommended raising the issue with a primary care doctor, who can offer counseling, medication or a referral. She said she often points patients to Rethinking Drinking, a website created by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism that helps people take stock of their drinking habits.

Whether the national decline in alcohol use disorder continues will likely depend on more than individual choices. In January, the federal government's updated dietary guidelines dropped the recommendation that men limit their consumption to two drinks a day and women to one, advising Americans simply to limit their intake. Experts said the eventual impact of this change was uncertain, but guidance that was more vague could sow confusion just as public awareness was growing.

"Progress could stall if we don't have greater investment in prevention," Dr. Esser said, whether from government, philanthropy or other private funders.

Instead, the public health infrastructure is shrinking, she added, as she knows firsthand. Last year the C.D.C.'s alcohol program — along with her job — was eliminated in the federal government's mass reduction in force. Similar cuts have thinned alcohol expertise across the federal government, she said, including at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

PAUL ELLIS/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE — GETTY IMAGES

The many health benefits of beets

They are rich in nitrate, which can improve blood flow and oxygen delivery

BY SIMAR BAJAJ

DAVID CHOW FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Beets owe their vibrancy — ruby red, deep purple, bright gold — to powerful antioxidants.

But what really sets these root vegetables apart is that they are a standout source of nitrate, a compound that can help regulate blood pressure and improve exercise performance.

"I get really jazzed about beets," said Bethany Doerfler, a dietitian at Northwestern Medicine in Chicago.

Here's a closer look at their benefits.

LOWER BLOOD PRESSURE

Beets have some of the highest nitrate content of any vegetable. Nitrate is absorbed into the bloodstream and eventually converted into nitric oxide, a powerful molecule that relaxes and widens blood vessels, said Gary Miller, chair of health and exercise science at Wake Forest University in North Carolina.

In one analysis, researchers found that beetroot juice — a drink made by pressing raw beets — reduced blood pressure by five points in people with hypertension, compared with a placebo. (Most studies are conducted with beetroot juice, rather than beets, because researchers can better control nitrate levels.)

Older adults and people with diabetes, obesity or cardiovascular disease tend to benefit more from dietary nitrate, Dr. Miller said, since their bodies naturally make less nitric oxide.

Nitrates sometimes get a bad rap because they are added to hot dogs and other processed meats and can turn into potentially carcinogenic compounds. But nitrates tend to behave differently when they come from vegetables, Ms. Doerfler said, most likely because of the accompanying vitamins and other protective plant compounds.

BEETS MAY BOOST YOUR WORKOUTS

In addition to lowering blood pressure, nitric oxide improves blood flow and oxygen delivery to working muscles, said Andrew Coggan, an exercise physiologist at Indiana University.

In an analysis of 23 studies, researchers found that beetroot juice improved endurance during aerobic exercise and made working out feel easier.

A separate meta-analysis by Dr. Coggan found that beetroot juice helped muscles generate 5 percent more power, on average, which matters for athletic performance and everyday tasks like climbing stairs.

But "the fitter you are, the less likely you are to benefit," he said, because a healthy person's natural nitric oxide production is already robust.

If you're eating beets or drinking beetroot juice before a workout, do so at least two hours beforehand, Dr. Coggan said, to give your body time to convert nitrate to nitric oxide.

Note that nitrate content can vary widely: Individual beets have substantially different levels, and a study of 24 beetroot juice products found that some had 50 times as much nitrate as others.

THEY SUPPORT BRAIN HEALTH

Early evidence suggests that the nitrate in beets can also improve blood flow to the brain. In one small imaging study, Dr. Miller found that older adults who consumed a high-nitrate diet (including beetroot juice and a beet salad) over about 24 hours had greater blood flow in certain brain regions, compared with when they consumed a low-nitrate diet.

Beets are also high in folate, which is important for fetal brain and spinal cord development. In adults, it helps prevent the buildup of homocysteine, a chemical that, at high levels, has been linked to a higher risk of cognitive decline. While many cereals are fortified with folic acid, beets are a great natural source, said Catherine Champagne, director of the nutritional epidemiology laboratory at Louisiana State University.

And beets contain betaine and betalains, antioxidants that may help reduce inflammation and cellular wear and tear.

THE HEALTHIEST WAY TO EAT THEM

Although beets are unusually sweet for a vegetable, they contain a decent amount of fiber, which helps temper sugar absorption.

Whole beets are generally a healthier choice than beetroot juice, Ms. Doerfler said, because the juicing process removes this fiber.

Canned and pickled beets can also be good options, she added, since their nitrate is generally preserved during processing.

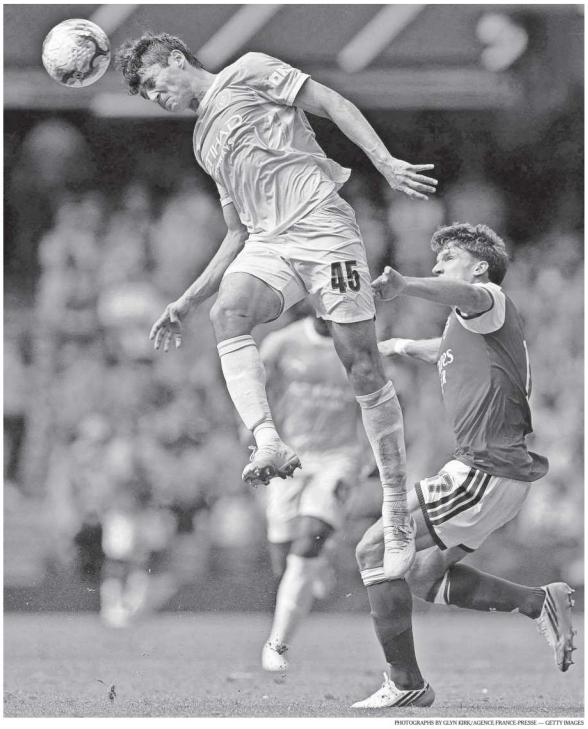
When boiling beets, their nitrate can leach into cooking water, Dr. Champagne said; consider using the liquid in a smoothie rather than discarding it. Also avoid cooking beets for too long, Ms. Doerfler added, since prolonged heat can break down some antioxidants. Lightly roasting, steaming or grating raw beets into a salad can preserve more of those healthy compounds.

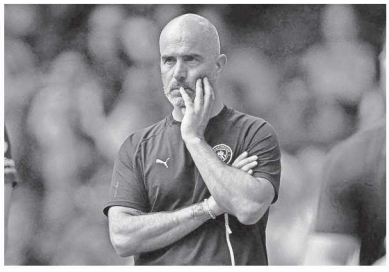
Sports

Manchester City needs a midfield makeover

Commentary

BY SAM LEE
THE ATHLETIC





PHOTOGRAPHS BY GLYN KIRK/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE — GETTY IMAGES

Left, Manchester City defender Abdukodir Khusanov in action against Arsenal during the Community Shield on Sunday. Above, Enzo Maresca, who has succeeded Pep Guardiola as City's manager. "We have many things that we need to do better," he said.

As far as season curtain-raisers go, Manchester City left a lot to be desired in its sorry loss to Arsenal in the Community Shield last weekend.

"We knew already before the game the things we need to do," Enzo Maresca, City's new manager, said afterward when asked if the manner of the defeat highlighted the need for signings. "We have it quite clear what we need to do, and for sure we are going to do something before the transfer window closes."

City has entrusted Maresca with continuing Pep Guardiola's work in Manchester, and the team entered the summer with the full intention of backing Maresca in the transfer market. But with little time left in the window, there is a sense that things have not gone according to plan so far, and the manner of the 3-0 defeat raised questions. City will host Bournemouth in its first match of the new Premier League season on Sunday.

City's three preseason games in Asia suggested that Maresca will bring Guardiola's style of play but sped up, with fast passing between the lines and a succession of dribbles from talented wide players. Sunday's game suggested stilted buildup play, an uncertain midfield and only sporadic opportunities for the wide men.

The team will probably end up somewhere in the middle. The biggest problems it has right now are that the squad is far from complete and that many of their biggest difference makers only recently returned from their post-World Cup vacations.

Facing a settled team such as Arsenal brutally exposed those facts, and the additional complicating factor is that Guardiola was so successful and set such high standards, that it is difficult to work out exactly what we should be comparing City to.

"In general, I am always concerned — even when we win games. So imagine it now that we did not win the game," Maresca said with half a smile after the match when asked about how easily City conceded its goals. "But it's just the beginning; we have many things that we need to do better."

"The first two goals we conceded, I didn't like," he added. "The first one because it was after 25 seconds; the second one, I think there was no pressure on the ball. I don't know if it's for physical condition — we had more players at the World Cup. I don't know the reason why, but the first two goals that we conceded, I don't like.

"In terms of things that I like, I think after the first goal we conceded, the reaction was very good."

There was a period between Arsenal's first two goals (scored by Riccardo Calafiori and Kai Havertz) where City looked somewhat settled and created some openings, although that was largely after 25 minutes. Before that, there were plenty of passes around the back, and while the players were not always flustered, they were hardly incisive.

On the first two goals, Abdukodir Khusanov, Rúben Dias and Gianluigi Donnarumma all had problems, and the third goal somehow looked even worse for City, with Martin Odegaard strolling through the penalty area.

It has never been wise to make sweeping judgments based on the Community Shield — anybody who remembers Erling Haaland's goalless debut in 2022 will know that — and while it is tempting to believe that everything will go wrong without Guardiola steering the ship, it would be foolish to overlook the fact that the Maresca era is about three weeks old, and half the midfield is missing.

As much as there was plenty to be encouraged by in Hong Kong and South Korea, there are some obvious concerns. Some of them go back further than preseason, to Maresca's time at Chelsea.

One regards the buildup. So far, we have seen that City is going to rely on several set patterns for getting the ball out from the goalkeeper, and it will use Maresca's trusted 3-2 shape, with three defenders behind two midfielders.

Under Guardiola, there was an ever-evolving set of solutions that could be executed by players such as Bernardo Silva, Rodri and Ilkay Gundogan, who were good enough to interpret things on the fly. Things are different now, and that is an inevitability of losing top players who have been at the club for years and the finest manager of his generation. The worry is that by coaching certain patterns when City is trying to build out from the back, opposition coaches will be able to come up with a plan to stop them.

City obviously has work to do in the transfer market, as Rodri and Tijani Reijnders have moved on, after Bernardo left at the end of last season. Ayyoub Bouaddi is poised to come in, and he is best suited to replicate the Rodri role, but at 18 years old, he simply cannot be expected to do everything Rodri did.

Enzo Fernández is a player who has split the City fan base, not only in terms of his ability but also in terms of the controversy following his singing of a racist song in 2024. Maresca wants him, but he is not seen as a Rodri replacement — the idea is that he would play further forward — and even if there are concerns about his contributions off the ball, he does certainly have fight in him, and that is a trait City needs.

It would be unwise to ignore Fernández's defensive deficiencies, considering the extra need to win a duel and track a runner in this ultraphysical Premier League. That is also important because Maresca is, so far, asking his wingers to press the opposition center backs, which means that the midfield needs to be ready for battle if the opposition moves the ball past the first line of the press.

City is building a team for these kinds of individual battles, and it means that the soccer is likely to be a lot more rough and ready than under Guardiola, but that would have been the case, even if to a lesser extent, had he remained in charge.

With players who are better suited to beating a man rather than passing a team to death, that is necessarily going to affect the type of soccer they play. As much as there are players whose weaknesses could be isolated, there are plenty who appear to fit Maresca's system like a glove — Nico O'Reilly, for example, could be a major attacking weapon from left back.

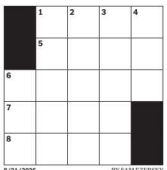
> **"In general, I am always concerned — even when we win games."**

If games come down to a series of individual battles, City does have players in both attack and defense who can thrive, even if there will probably be some painful afternoons as they find their feet. Last Sunday in Cardiff was one of them.

Even if there are areas to be concerned about, it is still in the very early days. There is plenty of time for those ideas to be improved upon, for the players to become used to them and for tweaks and evolutions to be made.

There will inevitably be doubts about post-Pep life, but it cannot be denied that the midfield is in urgent need of a makeover and the soccer is likely to be pretty different. Still, it is too early to make any judgments.

The Mini Crossword



8/21/2026

BY SAM EZERSKY
EDITED BY JOEL FAGLIANO

ACROSS

1 With 8-Across, candy pieces that got their name after the chocolatier tried to make them perfectly round, but failed
5 Home of Brunei and Bhutan
6 Like the skin of snakes and fish
7 Take ___ (suffer financially)
8 See 1-Across

DOWN

1 ___ Picchu
2 "To repeat myself ..."
3 Gentle musical melodies
4 What "every kiss begins with," in jewelry ads
6 Wearing an upside-down smile

ANSWER TO PREVIOUS PUZZLE

	L	A	B	
L	I	N	U	S
A	G	G	R	O
S	H	E	L	L
	T	R	Y	

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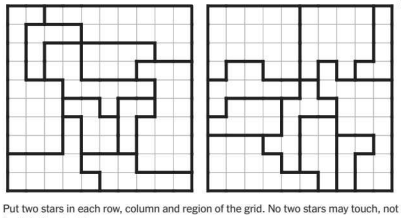
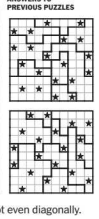
Two Not Touch



ANSWERS TO PREVIOUS PUZZLES



Put two stars in each row, column and region of the grid. No two stars may touch, not even diagonally.

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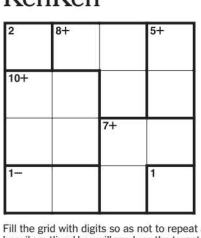
Brain Tickler

Name a popular app in two syllables. Change the vowel sound in the second syllable to a short A and phonetically you'll name a mint. What names are these?

PUZZLE BY WILL SHORTZ **YESTERDAY'S ANSWER** Mark Twain coined numerous English words, including "bicentennial," "brontosaurian" and "lunkhead."

KenKen



ANSWERS TO PREVIOUS PUZZLES

2	4	1	3
1	3	4	2
3	1	2	4
4	2	3	1

4	3	5	6	1	2
2	4	6	3	5	1
5	2	1	4	3	6
3	6	2	1	4	5
1	5	4	2	6	3
6	1	3	5	2	4

Fill the grid with digits so as not to repeat a digit in any row or column, and so that the digits within each heavily outlined box will produce the target number shown, by using addition, subtraction, multiplication or division, as indicated in the box. A 4x4 grid will use the digits 1-4. A 6x6 grid will use 1-6.

For more games: www.nytimes.com/games

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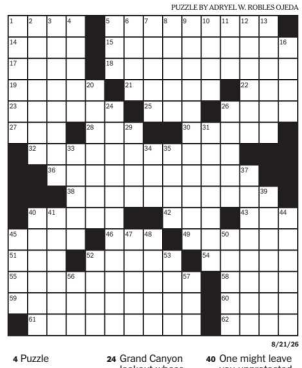
Crossword | Edited by Will Shortz

PUZZLE BY ADRYEL W. ROBLES OJEDA



8/21/26

ACROSS

1 Leader in a robe called a kasaya
5 Some malty offerings
14 Jejune
15 Coupling rings?
17 Come (together)
18 One sharing gold
19 Remy's brother in "Ratatouille"
21 High tea treat
22 Mathematician Terence, winner of the 2006 Fields Medal
23 ___ Ball, 2021 N.B.A. Rookie of the Year
25 Key for getting out
26 Gave temporarily
27 One-named pop star with Monkey Puzzle Records
28 ___ tov (Jewish festival)
30 Advantageous
32 Losing control emotionally, in slang
36 Drama club enthusiast
38 Italian hero?
40 Bold
42 Étendue bleue
43 Hindi for "reign"
45 Focus of a concussion protocol
46 N.L. East team, on scoreboards
49 Especially ornate
51 Mass. summer setting
52 Jack up
54 School units
55 In place?
58 Stuff in shakers
59 "Aww!"
60 Target of a search party
61 Is canned
62 Word repeated before "against the dying of the light" in a Dylan Thomas poem

DOWN

1 Names
2 Language spoken by Jesus
3 Place for a quick stop
4 Puzzle
5 La ti do, musically
6 Bovine sounds
7 Sport similar to pétanque
8 Character
9 "Sinners" director, 2025
10 Apogee
11 Where a serviette is laid
12 Haut monde
13 ___ Crosley, author of 2008's "I Was Told There'd Be Cake"
16 Impudent sort
20 Paris's Champs-___
24 Grand Canyon lookout whose name suggests visitors' reactions
26 Some baroque instruments
29 Diamond wear
31 Metal tube in a nuclear reactor
33 Jazz musician Jamal
34 Neighbor of Colo.
35 Mass unit
37 First filmmaker to receive the Order of Culture in Japan
39 Unprocessed inventory
40 One might leave you unprotected at night
41 What kid-friendly games typically are
44 What big crowds do
45 Fells
47 Hang-up
48 Something raised in a meeting
50 Julio ___ Chávez (boxing legend)
52 Possessive pronoun
53 "Cheerio"
56 Snitch
57 Neighbor of Ark.

ANSWER TO PREVIOUS PUZZLE

H	A	R	P		S	A	F	A	R	I		P	S	A
T	R	O	U		S	P	O	T	O	N		A	I	L
T	A	S	T	I	N	G	R	O	O	M		R	N	A
P	L	A	I	D		O	W	N		A	T	E	A	M
		N	U	E	V	A		S	T	U	D	I	O	
	H	O	R	N	S		R	I	P	E	R			
R	A	V	E	N	S		D	R	Y		N	D	A	S
B	R	A	V	O		E	T	A		L	O	O	F	A
I	D	L	E		M	E	H		D	E	F	R	A	Y
		R	E	I	K	I		O	N	P	A	R		
C	U	S	S	A	T		N	E	I	G	H			
I	S	L	E	T		O	K	S		T	R	A	C	E
R	U	E		S	P	L	I	T	S	H	A	I	R	S
C	A	P		U	S	E	N	E	T		S	N	I	P
A	L	T		P	I	G	G	E	D		E	T	S	Y

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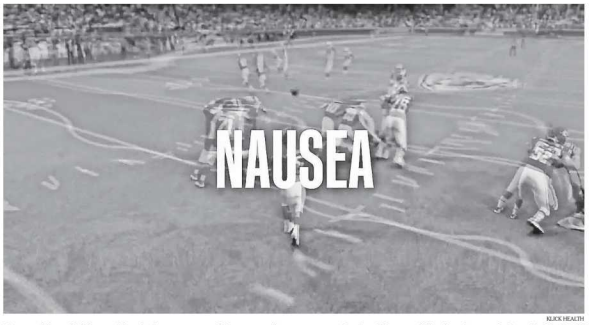
Culture



KLICK HEALTH

KLICK HEALTH

Nausea, blurred vision and headaches are some of the concussion symptoms simulated by a modification that can be installed in Madden NFL video games. One former linebacker called the effect "realism up to a point."

Making football pain real for gamers

A cost-free modification of an N.F.L. franchise evokes a concussion

BY MATT STEVENS AND KEN BELSON

As a linebacker tackles the New York Giants running back Cam Skattebo on a routine play, Skattebo's head slams to the ground.

For millions of people who play the Madden NFL video game franchise, Skattebo will get up and continue the drive unhindered. Concussions do not exist alongside the game's dislocated shoulders, broken ribs and ankle sprains.

But those players who have installed a free modification of the game will have a distorted experience. They may encounter blurred vision, light sensitivity, nausea, increased heart rate, headaches, shortness of breath, dizziness or tinnitus, the screen shaking as they hear a ringing sound.

The reach of the modification, or mod, that depicts common symptoms of concussions may be small, but its message is clear.

The successful Madden franchise — its newest game, Madden NFL 27, was released last week — is extremely faithful in its representation of the National Football League. It incorporates new short-yardage plays, detailed player tattoos and signature throwing styles. For many years, the distinctive tagline for its developer, EA Sports, was "If it's in the game, it's in the game."

So where are the concussions?

A spokesman for EA Sports declined to comment.

Chris Borland, a linebacker who left the N.F.L. after his rookie season because of concerns over the long-term effects of brain injuries, applauded the mod's effort to raise awareness. But he emphasized that there was a big difference between seeing a representation of a brain injury while sitting on your couch and actually experiencing one.

"It's really realism up to a point," he said of the mod. "Is there going to be a feature in the game where you can go home and have difficulty with your wife because you're irritable from your concussion?"

The mod is available to download only for the computer version of Madden 26, last year's game. It was a collaboration by Klick Health, a health care marketing agency, and the Derek Sheely Foundation, a concussion awareness nonprofit, which cite the coach and television analyst John Madden as inspiration.

When concussions were emphasized in Madden 12, which was released in 2011, the game's producer called it a "teaching tool." Athletes who sustained concussions were sidelined, and the announcers talked openly about the head injuries. John Madden, who had a major hand in the development of the franchise, told The New York Times that year that "concussions are such a big thing, it has to be a big thing in the video game."

"Concussions are really serious," he added. "If we show players playing through them, then kids won't understand."

Many athletes who appeared on the covers of previous Madden games have been knocked out with concussions in real games. In versions of Madden from the 1990s, an ambulance whisked injured players away. Well into the 2010s, players who writhed in pain while holding their heads would undergo what appeared to be a concussion test.

But it was around that time that the N.F.L. came under fire.

The Hall of Fame linebacker Junior Seau died by suicide and was found to have chronic traumatic encephalopathy, the degenerative brain disease known as C.T.E. The N.F.L. settled a lawsuit brought by thousands of former players and their families who accused the league of hiding the dangers of brain injuries; the league has since paid more than $1.5 billion in claims. A feature film starring Will Smith, "Concussion," chronicled the discovery of C.T.E. in pro football players.

By the end of the decade, concussions had disappeared from Madden.

Ben Utecht, a tight end who retired from the N.F.L. in 2010 because of his concerns about the long-term effects of concussions, said the league never wanted to bring attention to head injuries "because obviously you want to inspire parents and kids to continue playing the game."

"But," he added, when it comes to the Madden video game, "you shouldn't just remove one injury if you're going to include the rest."

Other injuries still occur, with gamers forced to decide whether to keep a player with an ankle bruise on the field and risk a more severe injury or to sub him out. They can also decide to turn injuries off altogether.

Members of the N.F.L.'s licensing department review Madden games each year to ensure "quality control," and they can make suggestions to Electronic Arts. That has involved discussions about the inclusion of concussion evaluations, according to a former league executive who recalled discussions about the feature. Because there are only a few potential concussions per game, the league wanted the head injury to be incorporated realistically, the former executive recalled.

Another person with direct knowledge of the negotiations recalled discussions about what would cause a concussion in a game, because, in real life, two players might absorb similar hits, but only one might get a concussion.

The N.F.L. declined to comment.

Last season, there were 168 reported concussions in the N.F.L., an increase from 129 a year earlier that the league attributed to rule changes encouraging more kick returns. The league's concussion protocol requires a blue tent on the sideline where players must undergo testing if they exhibit signs of a possible concussion.

Mods are a longstanding component of the video game community. They can, for instance, alter the character creation and inventory management in role-playing games, and they can enable college football fans to play a decade-old game with current rosters.

The concussion mod for Madden ended up being 9,000 lines of code. Its creators hope that giving gamers a taste of the symptoms that athletes may experience after hits to the head will increase awareness.

Kristen Thomson Sheely, the executive director of the Derek Sheely Foundation, said she knew how popular Madden was because her son Derek played it. He died at the age of 22 after sustaining a brain injury during a college football practice in 2011.

"This could reach so many people," she said of the mod, "a whole different audience of people who would never order a concussion kit."

Derek Sheely was a fullback at Frostburg State University in Maryland when he complained of a headache during practice after having apparently already sustained a head injury, according to court papers. A coach berated him for complaining, the documents say, and he was sent back in for a 7-on-7 drill.

Sheely was then involved in a collision with a defensive back. He walked back to the sideline, but within a few minutes "collapsed and never regained consciousness," a legal complaint said.

Eventually, the family reached a $1.2 million settlement with the N.C.A.A. and other defendants including Frostburg State, which was required to retire the fullback's number and display it on campus.

Those playing with the Madden concussion mod are also given a moment to remember Derek Sheely. When their games end, a banner unfurls. It is his jersey, No. 40.

WEEKLY STRATEGY
Welcome to Weekly Strategy! You can evaluate, replace or upgrade your coaching staff here.
SET COACH ABILITIES
Your Loadout
Available Abilities
Set Coach Abilities to utilize your staff's skills and utilize Playsheets to keep teams guessing with unique additions to your playbook.
GAMEDAY AND SEASON ABILITIES
Platinum Tier IV
Gold Tier III
Silver Tier II
Bronze Tier I
Staff Loadouts can consist of both gameday abilities that work week-to-week or season abilities that must be used for a certain period of time.
WEAR AND TEAR
Tom Hunkele
High Risk
Add Ability
Low Risk
Use Trainer Abilities and manage player reps to ensure players are fresh and navigate wear and tear.

ELECTRONIC ARTS

From immediately above, abilities gamers have to prevent and manage player injuries, and Saquon Barkley of the Philadelphia Eagles.

Aging friends on life and what matters most

DOCUMENTARY LENS

'The Bend in the River' interweaves footage from films shot decades apart

BY ALISSA WILKINSON

Aging comes with a lot of baggage, and the emotions that accompany self-reflection are definitely part of it. The friends who are the subjects of Robb Moss's new documentary, "**The Bend in the River**" (in theaters), have reached their 70s and are doing plenty of reflecting as a result.

They first appeared in Moss's short "Riverdogs," filmed in 1978 as he and his friends, all in their 20s, worked as guides on the Colorado River. Decades later, he visited five of them, firmly ensconced in middle age, for his 2003 film "The Same River Twice."

"The Bend in the River" revisits the five — Danny Silver, Jim Tickenor, Cathy Shaw, Jeff Golden and Barry Wasserman — some 20 or so years later, and Moss catches us up on their lives by weaving footage from the previous movies into new conversations. Often the years bleed into one another quickly, showing how time has changed his subjects. We see them young, bronzed and very nude, scampering around the riverbanks; and then older but still strong, pressed with the cares of family and work; and now, visibly beyond physical peak and thinking about what it's all meant.

"I think our legacy, it's got to be more than salad bars and Bill Clinton," Silver says, reflecting on her generation's legacy with a rueful smile.

Moss has his friends watch excerpts from the previous films and comment; they talk about how beautiful they were without knowing it when they were young. They discuss how back then, they thought they understood what aging would be like, but really they had no idea. They remark on the things that seemed as if they mattered but didn't, and those that didn't seem to matter but did. Often their musings are poignant in the most unassuming way: Whatever life has to offer, "I already either did it or didn't do it at this point," one says. Time changes the way you look at the past and the future.

None of these people are famous, though three have run for public office, including Golden, whose campaign for State Senate is captured in "Bend." He runs into a snag when activists discover "The Same River Twice," in which he talks about cheating on Shaw, whom he had married and then divorced. The point of a film like "Bend" isn't to illuminate the lives of well-known people. Instead, the five and Moss himself are a bit like avatars for viewers, who have reached the same age, or who will, if they're lucky. What does it mean to live a full life? When the road ahead is shorter than the road behind, what will you think about? In this way, "The Bend in the River" sits alongside a few recent documentaries by other filmmakers looking back at their lives, like Ralph Arlyck's "I Like It Here" and Ross McElwee's "Remake." They're all funny and rueful and sometimes gutting, because as the people onscreen ruminate on the meaning of their own lives, they spur us to mull our own. In "The Bend in the River," a lot of simple observations and moments add up to something profound. Its wisdom sneaks up on you, just like age.

FILM FORUM

Jim Tickenor, left, and four friends reflect on their lives in Robb Moss's latest documentary about the group.

CULTURE

Drawing out other tales of survival

Elizabeth Smart, abducted as a child, now has her own true-crime podcast

BY MAYA SALAM

It might not seem as if Elizabeth Smart, whose 2002 kidnapping became one of the most high-profile in history, would want to immerse herself in stories of similar horrors. She doesn't see it that way at all.

On a new podcast, "The Survivor Files With Elizabeth Smart," Smart speaks with survivors of violent crimes to explore not just what happened but what came after, including the continuing process of healing. For the first episode, she sat down with Kara Robinson Chamberlain, who escaped a serial killer at age 15.

"The determination to continue moving forward, finding that inner strength — that's the part that just really speaks to me," Smart recently told The New York Times in a conversation about the 48-episode weekly series, which debuted on Monday through iHeartPodcasts.

Smart was 14 when she was kidnapped in the middle of the night from her bedroom in her family's Salt Lake City home by Brian David Mitchell. She was then held captive and brutally abused by him and his wife, Wanda Barzee, for nine months before being rescued.

"My No. 1 concern is just making sure that people feel comfortable because they are sharing the worst moments of their life."

Now 38, Smart lives outside Salt Lake City with her husband and three children. She has long worked to raise awareness around issues of child safety, sexual assault and trauma recovery, in part through the Elizabeth Smart Foundation, and says this podcast feels like the next meaningful step.

"There's nothing more powerful than when the survivor of the story is the person sharing their story," she said.

Here are edited excerpts from our conversation.

NIKI CHAN WYLIE FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

DOUGLAS C. PIZAC/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Elizabeth Smart, above outside her home in Utah, says, "There is no timeline on healing." Left, volunteers heading out to search for her in 2002 after her abduction in the middle of the night in Salt Lake City. She was rescued six months later.

This podcast is a bit of a hybrid: part documentary style, part intimate conversation. Why was this the best format for you to examine such stories?

It is very important for our listeners to understand the magnitude of not just the stories, but of the people themselves — what they've been through. So we have our guests walk us through, beat by beat, what happened. What was going through their mind? How did they feel in that moment? What did they think was going to happen next? Did they think anyone else was aware? So our listeners can feel connected and understand just how important the resiliency and the moving forward part is.

Because if you don't understand the depth of how dark it was, how can you understand how incredibly bright they shine now?

It's really easy when we hear other people share stories to sit there and be like: "Well, why didn't they do that? Well, why didn't they do this?" As a survivor myself, I understand where the curiosity comes from, but I also understand how hurtful it can be hearing someone be, like: "Well, why didn't you run? Why didn't you scream?"

So when we have a survivor sharing what happened, it's much easier to be, like: "OK, I understand what was going through your mind. I understand why that wasn't an option."

As someone who has been interviewed extensively for decades, what changes for you when you step into the role of interviewer?

My No. 1 concern is just making sure that people feel comfortable because they are sharing the worst moments of their life with me. If they're feeling too emotional, if they feel like this is too hard, I will always tell them, "Do we need to step away from this?"

I'll say: "If I ask you a question and you don't want to answer it, you don't want to talk about it, just tell me. That is fine. This is your story. We want it in your words." I'll tell my guests, "If you have a better question for me to ask, or a better way to ask that question, please tell me."

Has there been a moment where a guest said something that changed or expanded your perspective on healing?

I've been saying it for years, but it just brought new meaning, reaffirmed it to me: Having interviewed survivors of all sorts of horrific nightmares and just unimaginable things, there is no timeline on healing. Maybe that's one of the most important messages that this podcast will put out there because we have guests on who experienced something 50 years ago, and it's still a work in progress. There is no magic formula. We're all just doing the best that we can. We all have to find our own way forward. And we're not alone. There are others around us.

What is one recurring theme about human resilience that has stood out to you most across these episodes?

Certainly just the strength of humanity is incredible. It's so common — I have people come up to me and say, "I could never go through what you did." And honestly, if I heard someone share my story, and it wasn't me, I'd probably think the same thing. But you don't know how strong you are until you're going through something.

That's true of every person that I've interviewed. Nobody thinks they're that strong until they don't have another direction to go in, until they are forced to be that strong.

It's about taking that next step, that next breath, making it through that next minute.

Your case received extraordinary media coverage, but thousands of missing persons — particularly Indigenous, Black and marginalized individuals — never get a fraction of that attention. How do you feel about what's been coined "missing white woman syndrome" in the true crime space?

They're not wrong. If I hadn't been white and blond and grown up in an affluent neighborhood, would my story have gotten the attention that it did? No, it wouldn't. It's not fair. It's not right. So absolutely I want to share stories of people from every walk of life because it shouldn't just be reserved for white blond women.

Also, at the end of the day, I'm not going to be sorry that my case received the attention that it did, because I'm here. I'm alive. Do we need to do more? Thousand percent, yes. So much change needs to happen. But I will forever be grateful for the attention that my case got.

The true crime genre and its fandoms have a reputation for crossing boundaries. What do you think about this voyeuristic appetite?

There is a line to walk. I also find it very interesting that for many people, that's the last thing they watch or listen to before they go to bed at night. How do I make sense of that? I mean, I can't. But then I am immersed in the world of fighting sexual assault and violence and abuse and kidnapping. So that's kind of my day-to-day. But I certainly don't want it to be the last thing I think of before I go to sleep.

Lust in translation

BOOK REVIEW

The Maltese Version
By Katy Simpson Smith. *FSG Originals. 320 pp. Paperback. $19.*

BY LUCY IVES

About a third of the way through Katy Simpson Smith's philosophical and disarmingly dishy new novel, one of its two heroines, Leonie, decides against having a one-night stand. She's not going to "burrow" into some guy's "psyche for the pleasure of the unknown." Her reason? "Love wasn't the same as not-knowing."

Well, that's refreshing, I thought, dog-earing the page. Leonie's useful aphorism, a negative definition of love employing a double negative, was my first hint that the meringue-light surface of "The Maltese Version," which had thus far presented itself as a caper about two female friends trying to make it in the dying travel-guide industry, might conceal unforeseen depths.

Smith is an observant and dexterous writer. Although there is certainly some satirical recycling of anodyne vibes à la recent artifacts like "Emily in Paris" and even "Bridgerton," "The Maltese Version" is in fact a steely exploration of novelistic form and what said form can and cannot reveal. It's a book that — for both its inventiveness and its many linguistic sleights of hand — can renew our faith in the playful joys and critical capacity of fiction.

The outlines of Smith's plot are as follows: Leonie, a white woman in her 30s memorably described as possessing an "otter body," is work wives with Rhoda, a Black woman in her 40s whose outwardly impeccable 20-year marriage to a businessman named Ike has begun to seem like a dead end.

The women toil diligently at Spinder's Guides, a Chicago-based publisher whose overlords assign Western European tourist traps to Leonie, and to Rhoda all viable Caribbean islands. However, they begin to break out of their personal and professional typecasting when Leonie's cagey boyfriend, Max, an up-and-coming literary translator, disappears to Malta.

The problem with Leonie and Max is that they can't decide if they love each other. Their relationship is at once so tepid and so typical that anyone who has ever lived in proximity to young urban professionals in America will experience instant recognition. It's not so much that the partnership is loveless, but that it seems to have become a sort of small business based on Leonie and Max's shared interest in importing international languages and experiences.

When they fight, they fight about semantics. Did Max just say that he didn't love Leonie's mom? Did Leonie just define the word "love" incorrectly?

CHLOE CUSHMAN

Max's relocation to a predictably sultry villa on Gozo, an island in the Maltese archipelago purported to be the site where the nymph Calypso trapped Odysseus, provokes a crisis.

Also predictably, this crisis is precipitated by the statuesque charms of Ana, a Maltese poet whose verses on eroticism, loss and female rage have gone viral. Milquetoast Max can't translate Ana without getting pretty intimate. Real sex transpires. Unforeseen uses are found for a lemon.

Back in Chicago, a desperate Leonie persuades Rhoda to use her pull as the magazine's resident "island queen" — an epithet Rhoda does not allow to pass without comment — to land an assignment in Malta. Max isn't picking up his phone, and Rhoda is tired of her role as primary caregiver for her 10-year-old son and all-purpose assistant to the work-addicted if hunky Ike.

The first crisis, of an unimaginative translator cheating on his girlfriend as a way of getting ahead professionally, is amusingly compounded by the arrival of Rhoda, who wants not only to skewer Max but also to live out her own narrative fantasies, believability be damned.

Since Henry James if not before, naïve American protagonists have been sent overseas to work out their issues. If back home is a place "where you can't get by without mimicking good cheer," as Max thinks, then Malta is, like Ana, all "introversion and mild hostility."

The country's political history — the "corruption, the Mob-like morality of this handful of ancient families . . . Malta as fiefdom, Malta as crossroads" — seeps into Smith's descriptions. The island is a "dinosaur land" that is "crumbling into the sea," characterized by "carceral" architecture. By contrast, Leonie and Max are people who seem not to have experienced history at all. A major quandary in Leonie's life in Chicago is whether to wear pink socks or white.

The atavistic desire, and the reverberations of violence past and present, that appear to hold sway in Malta cannot, it turns out, be expressed via Max's "sanitized this-is-that" transposition.

The novel's resident translator feels a dangerous combination of sexual longing for and jealousy of Ana's native tongue, or what he confusedly perceives as "the luxury of possessing the source language."

But translation can never be an act of ownership; it's the writing of a "second story," as a wiser and more independent Leonie will come to realize near the novel's close.

That is to say that Ana and Max's literary and erotic jousting provides a fortuitous backdrop for Rhoda and Leonie's own quests, for a new language with which to translate their secret inner lives — and their provisional, possibly imperfect definitions of love — into conscious thought and, they fervently hope, action. Love might be a three-stage process of terror, comfort, then separation; it might be two lovers "shouting to each other through the trees." It might happen in words, but then again, and most deliciously, maybe not.

Lucy Ives is the author of several works, including the novel "Life Is Everywhere," "Cosmogony: Stories" and the essay collection "An Image of My Name Enters America."

LIVING

The wild summers that shaped a young chef

PROVINCETOWN, MASS.

Our writer goes looking for the people and places that defined Bourdain

BY PETE WELLS

One summer day in the mid-1970s when Anthony Bourdain was a teenage dishwasher at the Flagship here, he and the rest of the kitchen crew gathered around a window to watch their boss have a very intimate encounter with a female customer outside in the trash-bin corral. Dressed in a bridal gown, the customer had just been married and was about to have dinner with the rest of her wedding party. First, though, she was getting a little something from the chef.

History does not record whether the marriage prospered. We do know, though, what witnessing that primal scene did to Mr. Bourdain's adolescent brain, already buzzing from the swaggering misbehavior he'd seen inside the kitchen. In that moment, he said later without elaborating, he knew he wanted to become a chef.

Mr. Bourdain came to Cape Cod that summer with no job and few ambitions other than hanging out and getting high. By the end of the season, he had found, possibly for the first time, something he wanted to aspire to.

This discovery is the theme of "Tony," a feature film directed by Matt Johnson that opened earlier this month in the United States and began opening internationally Aug. 14, with release dates this week in Taiwan and Australia. The movie, set in Provincetown, takes liberties with what really happened, as biopics do. Its focus is squarely on the kitchen rather than the ways his three summers there shaped the sensibility he expressed in the 2000 memoir that made him a media star, "Kitchen Confidential: Adventures in the Culinary Underbelly," and the television shows that followed.

To get a clearer picture, I went to Provincetown last month, following the Bourdain trail as many fans have done during his life and after his death by suicide, in 2018, at 61.

No doubt there are Asian and African villages where Mr. Bourdain, traveling with his camera crew, stayed for less time but is remembered in more detail by more people. But I still found people who knew him in Provincetown, and it was still possible to see the place where his first career began and his next one may have started to percolate.

A TOWN ON THE MARGIN

Michael Cunningham, the novelist and a part-time local, recently called Provincetown "one of relatively few places in America that not only tolerates eccentricity but prefers it."

This was even more true in the 1970s, when the town floated on cultural tides far from mainstream American currents. Except the Portuguese-speaking Azorean fishermen, who were there for the fish, almost everybody came for what the town didn't have: rules, malls, two-car garages, stringent morality and a cost of living likely to interfere with personal desires.

Provincetown's patchwork social fabric came together at places like Piggy's, where Norman Mailer and Robert Motherwell shared the dance floor with local characters. Apartments and cottages all over town could be rented on the cheap.

Living a marginal existence was easy. In a sense, the town was nothing but margins. It was a safe harbor for poets, artists, drifters, clamdiggers, gay men, lesbians, drag queens, hippies and dropouts of all kinds. There was even room for students who wanted to try on a new personality before the fall semester, like Mr. Bourdain, who seemed to be making a concerted effort to flunk out of Vassar College.

The Tony of "Tony," played by Dominic Sessa, stumbles onshore lovesick and alone, in pursuit of a girl named Nancy. In real life, Mr. Bourdain rolled into town with a pack of pals that included Nancy Putkoski, who had been his girlfriend on and off for some time. (They married in 1985 and divorced 20 years later.)

"They were high school sweethearts," recalled John Yingling, the founder of Spiritus Pizza, as he sat on a bench looking at summer crowds parading down Commercial Street, the town's main drag.

Spiritus was the hub of Mr. Bourdain's social wheel. Mr. Yingling's sister went to Vassar, too, and she began bringing her circle with her on summer trips to Provincetown. Nancy, who brought Mr. Bourdain along for three summers, worked at Spiritus.

She was a great favorite there. Mr. Bourdain was another story. With a troublemaker's grin, long curly hair and the torso of a snake, he looked like the singer in a band that a college station in Boston might have played late at night.

"He was a pain-in-the-ass kid around here, to me, a lot of times," Mr. Yingling said.

There must have been moments when Mr. Bourdain's roommates shared the feeling. They had jobs. He did not. They paid the rent on a cottage. He slept there.

"We all went to the beaches and ponds each morning, smoked pot, sniffed a little coke, dropped acid and sunbathed nude, as well as indulging in other healthy teenage activities," he wrote in "Kitchen Confidential."

His idyllic freeloading ended one night when a roommate came home from her job at the Flagship in a bad mood.

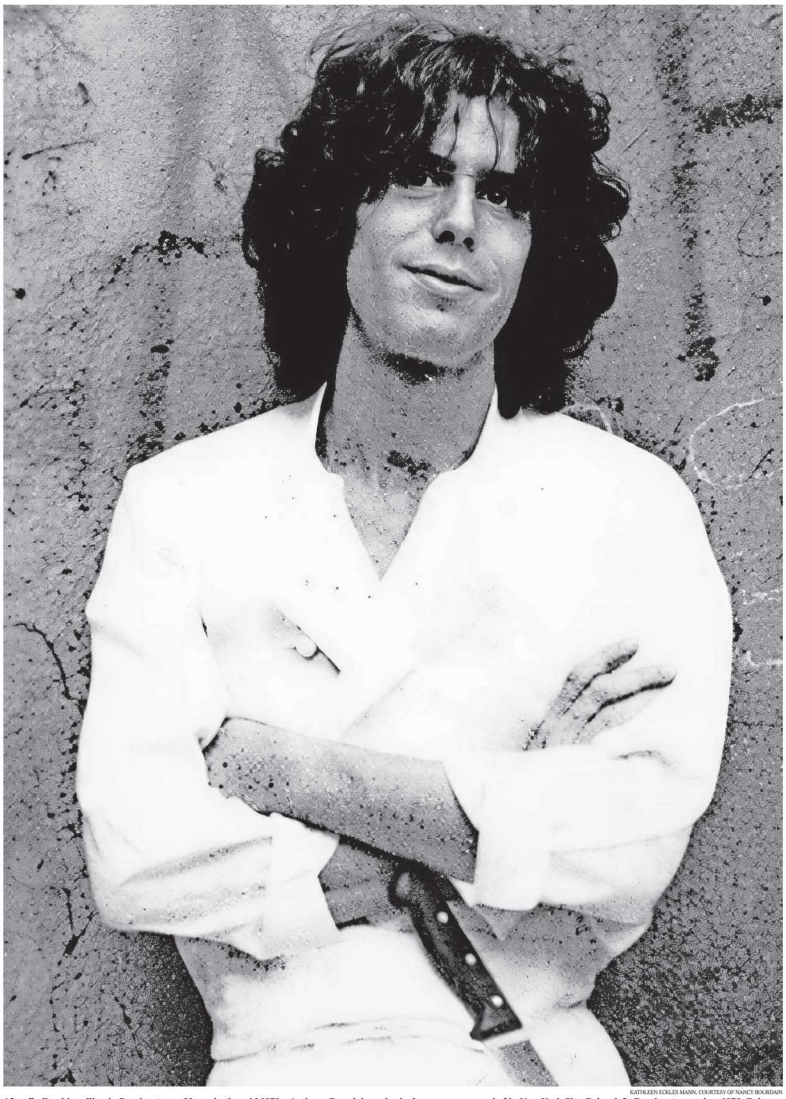
The dishwasher hadn't turned up, and dinner service had resembled a typhoon out of "Moby-Dick." As she later relayed it to Mr. Yingling, her conversation with Mr. Bourdain went like this:

"I hate the restaurant business. But you know who our new dishwasher is?"

"No, who?"

"You!"

The next day, Mr. Bourdain tied on an apron. "And he never turned back," Mr. Yingling said.



KATHLEEN ECKLES MANN, COURTESY OF NANCY BOURDAIN

GETTY IMAGES

A24

After finding his calling in Provincetown, Mass., in the mid-1970s, Anthony Bourdain embarked on a career as a chef in New York City. Below left, Provincetown, circa 1970. Below right, Dominic Sessa as a 19-year-old Anthony Bourdain, with Emilia Jones as Nancy, his love interest, in the biopic "Tony," which opened this month in the United States.

FINDING A CALLING

Now a private home, the Flagship sat in a long, skinny, shingled building that juts out past the sea wall on pilings. The one detail said to survive is the bar, which was built out of an old, scarred wooden dory. I tried everything short of breaking and entering to get a look at it. I failed.

Inside the Flagship, which went by the alias the Dreadnaught in "Kitchen Confidential," the cooks were busy frying seafood and broiling chops and steaks.

Mr. Bourdain's unruly soul seemed to find purpose and order in the channeled mania of the kitchen. He became, as he later told The Guardian, more than happy — "in fact, intensely satisfied." When he moved from the dish sink to the salad station, the deep fryer and finally, for a few late-season shifts, the fearsome broiler, "I was overjoyed," he said.

As part of the crew, Mr. Bourdain settled into one of Provincetown's many margins. He also observed it, studying the mores of kitchen society with an anthropologist's eye while his body rode its adrenaline highs. Years later, when he wrote about the life, he sounded like Margaret Mead with a sense of humor and a backpack full of amphetamines.

The effect was galvanic, said Adam Platt, the former restaurant critic for New York magazine, "similar to Martin Luther pounding his theses on the church door." Our current obsession with what goes on backstage at restaurants — the whole teeming underworld of calloused hands, burn-scarred forearms and raging personality disorders — began then. It's a straight line from "The Bear" back to "Kitchen Confidential."

Before Mr. Bourdain died, when the lawless ways of restaurant kitchens came under fire for fostering serious physical and sexual abuse, he said he regretted valorizing that culture. He also came to a less celebratory perspective on drug use in Provincetown restaurants, which was notorious, even by the standards of the '70s.

"Many of our friends from those days didn't make it," he said during a conversation with Mr. Yingling when he revisited Massachusetts in 2014 for his TV series "Parts Unknown." He talked in that episode about his own heroin use and an epidemic of the drug elsewhere in the state.

In that first summer, though, he saw nothing but upside in the pirate's life.

"HE SEEMED VERY CALLOW"

The next spring, he came back to the Flagship to apply again for his post at the broiler. Unfortunately for him, the place had a new owner: Ciriaco Cozzi, who also ran Ciro's, an Italian restaurant on a nearby lane paved with clamshells and scented with garlic.

Mr. Cozzi set his standards high. Ciro's bought whole veal legs that were broken down into scallopine and cutlets, the hand-chopped trimmings worked into meatballs. Garlic was sliced moments before it hit the pan. Using few shortcuts, a crackerjack team of cooks somehow pushed out around 500 dinners a night, seven nights a week.

"Ciro's at that time was the busiest, most fantastic restaurant in Provincetown," said Mr. Yingling, who let Mr. Bourdain sleep in a crawl space over his walk-in refrigerator at Spiritus during this audition.

Mr. Bourdain was awe-struck by the cooks at Ciro's, called Mario's in his memoir. "They moved in a pack, with their own dialect," he wrote, "a high-pitched, ultra-femme, affected drawl, salted with terms from eighteenth-century English literature and Marine Corps drill instructor-speak — a lush, intimidating, sardonic secret language, which was much imitated."

The admiration was not mutual. After he burned himself on a frying pan in a disastrous tryout, Mr. Bourdain was kicked back down to salads.

"We looked at him and sort of sneered, because he seemed very callow and, on the one hand, full of himself and, on the other hand, unsure," said Alexej Getmanov, the Ciro's cook called Dimitri in the book. Mr. Bourdain told him their disdain got under his skin and prompted him to attend the Culinary Institute of America, starting in February 1977. "He said, 'Well, I'll show them.'"

Ciro's is now owned by the Luster family, two of whom, James and Larry, worked with Mr. Bourdain. Now under its original name, Ciro & Sal's, the restaurant still breaks down whole legs of veal, even more rare today than it was then. The lane still smells like garlic.

INSPIRED BY A COOKBOOK

Few other businesses from Mr. Bourdain's era are still going. There's the Provincetown Portuguese Bakery, where malasadas are fried in the window. The Lobster Pot, where his childhood friend Sam Goldman worked, is as busy as ever, but it wasn't a hangout.

"We never ate there; it was for tourists and day-trippers," Nancy Bourdain, his former wife, wrote in an email. (She declined an interview request.) "I think we subsisted on food from local year-round spots like Tips for Tops'n, the Portuguese Bakery and Cookie's Tap (kale soup with linguiça), lots of pizza, and cooking at home. We saved our money for going out to the local bars (Piggy's and the Governor Bradford), other 'stuff' and rent."

Versions of kale soup are still all over, even though the Portuguese community that brought it to the Cape is nearly gone. But looking for recipes that shaped Mr. Bourdain's young palate is beside the point. We aren't interested in him today because of the dishes he created as a chef so much as the way he wrote about the work, and the appreciation he showed, in his television career, for people who did their own particular thing in their own particular way.

In this regard, one book might be the Rosetta Stone for Bourdain scholars: Howard Mitcham's "Provincetown Seafood Cookbook," published in 1975.

Deaf, alcoholic and so dedicated to marine life that he kept a pet quahog in a jar, Mr. Mitcham was the closest thing Provincetown had to a name chef. A copy of "Provincetown Seafood Cookbook" was presented to Mr. Bourdain when he started cooking at the Flagship. This custom lives on, I learned. Mac Hay, an owner of Mac's Fish House Provincetown, gives the book to all his head chefs. "You need to understand the simplicity of this food," he tells them.

Mr. Bourdain absorbed the book's culinary wisdom, but it was the writing that captivated him. The text is energetic, passionate, oracular, wide-ranging, deeply grounded in the town's seafaring history and the culture of its chowder-eating Yankees, the Portuguese fishermen who dried salt cod in their yards and an Italian painter who sutured stuffed squid with needle and thread. The kind of eating Mr. Mitcham liked best was lusty, messy and unpretentious. His prose seems to rise from the muck of the harbor.

Mr. Bourdain clearly saw a kindred spirit and maybe, too, a model for how a cook with an omnivorous curiosity could apply it to another medium. He celebrated the book at length in "Kitchen Confidential," and adapted two of its recipes for "Appetites: A Cookbook," published in 2016.

"Provincetown Seafood Cookbook" was long out of print by then. Copies were going for $50 and up at Tim's Used Books off Commercial Street. The owner, Tim Barry, got together with Seven Stories Press to reissue it.

The publisher asked for a preface by a well-known figure. Mr. Barry emailed a request to Mr. Bourdain, who was off shooting "Parts Unknown" on the other side of the globe. His reply came the next day. When do you need it?

"He was totally professional, and we didn't change one word," Mr. Barry said, sitting in a garden below the narrow raised boardwalk that leads to his shop.

Seven Stories published the reissue, with an introduction by Mr. Bourdain calling it "a true classic, one of the most influential of my life," in June 2018. He had been found dead in a hotel room in France 16 days earlier.

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